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See page 6

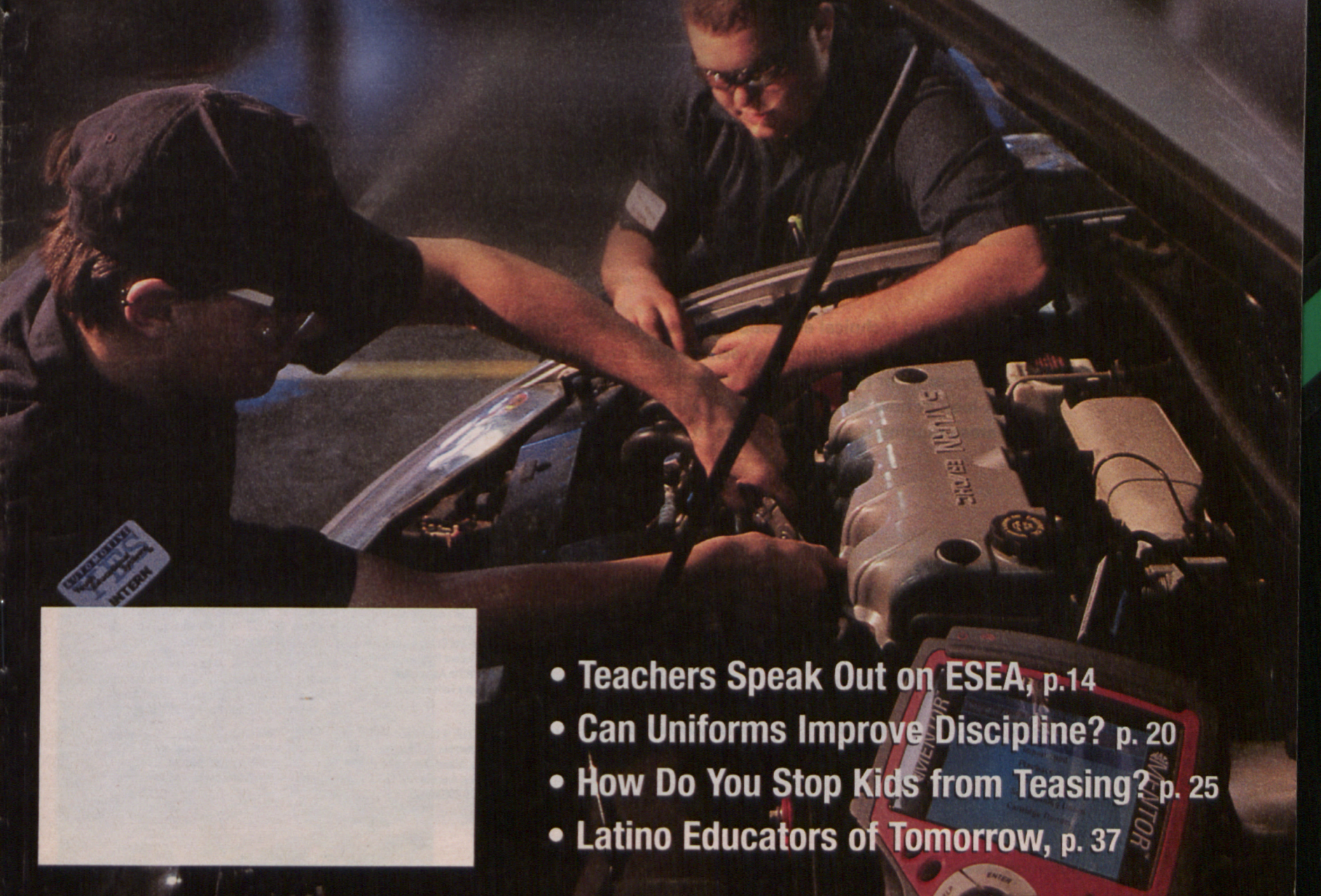
April 2002

NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Driving Forces

New model 'vocational education' fuels students for careers, not just jobs — *see page 8*



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NEA Today

April 2002

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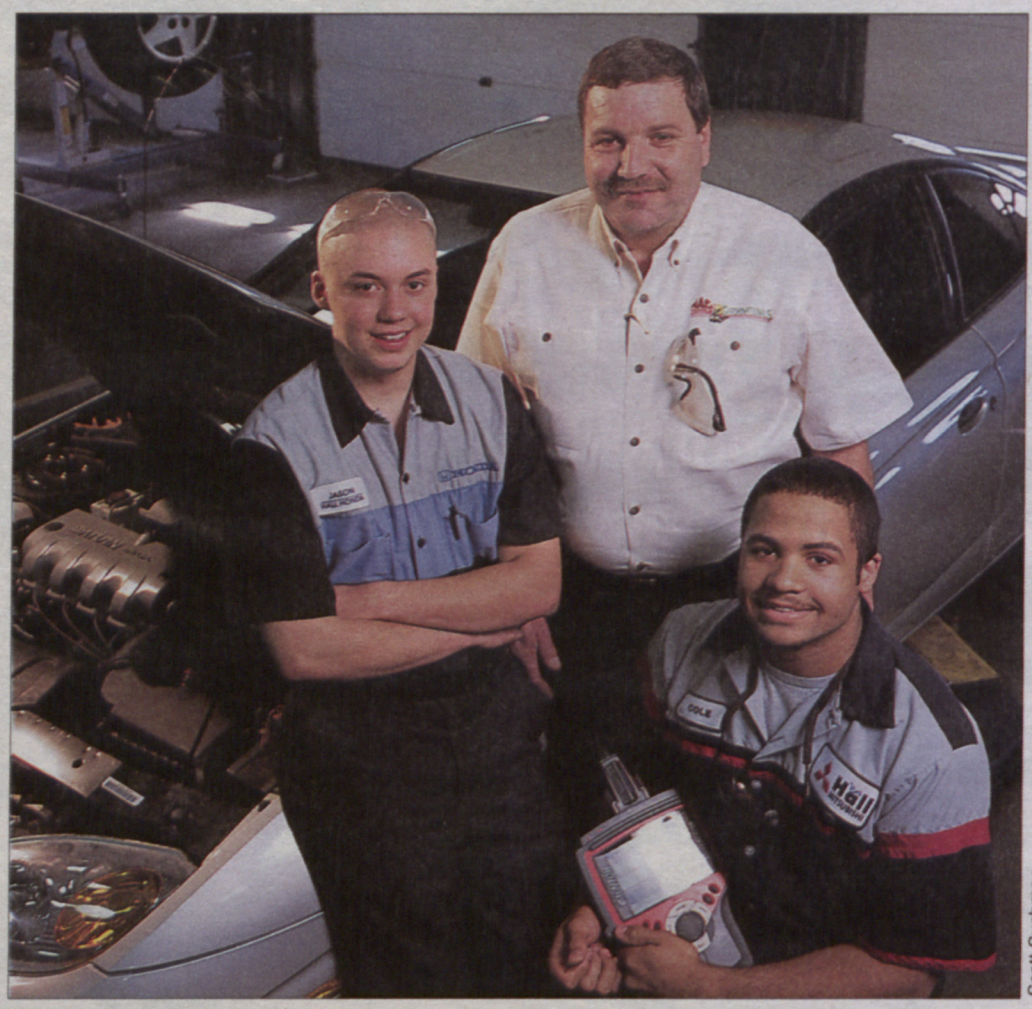

Scott Suchman

COVER STORY

Driving Forces

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Career and technical education—once known as vocational education—is providing high school students with new ways to enter rewarding careers and earn college credits. A look at how students like Mark Maund's (above) embrace areas ranging from automobiles to biotechnology.

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Publisher
Kate Mattos

Editor
Bill Fischer

Manager, NEA Publications
Leona Hiraoka

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Production
Kelly Cedeño, Deane Jenkins, Christian Lopez, Catherine Rawson

Contributing Writers
Anita Merina, Dina Spector Gómez
Matt Simon

Editorial Interns
Urmila Subramanyam

Art Direction
Vanessa Sifford
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NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published eight times a year, monthly, in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to NEA Today, Attn: NEA Membership Records Address Change, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202/822-7065. **Members:** To change address, see Reader Services box to the right.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription price: $45 institutional, $80 domestic and foreign. For members, subscriptions represent $4 of annual dues.

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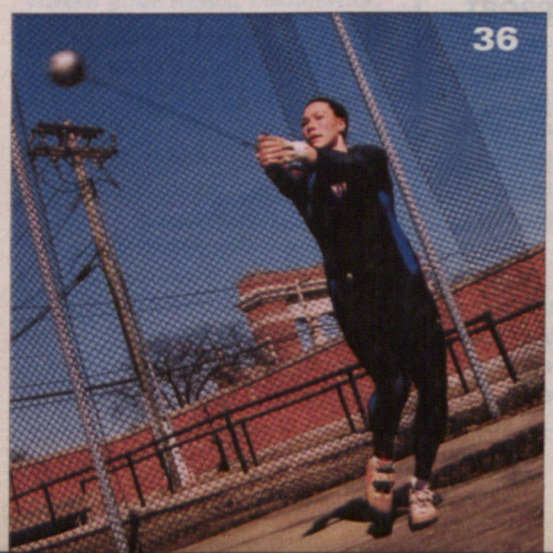

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Letters

ASTHMA ADVICE

As a school nurse, I was pleased to see an article that contained good advice for asthma sufferers (Health & Fitness, March). However, I object to the concept of allowing children "to keep their inhalers with them so that they can control minor asthma symptoms without having to visit a nurse." A visit to the school nurse entails much more than just getting medication. We monitor the severity and frequency of asthma symptoms. When necessary, we refer students for care of acute illness. We also teach students about self-care of their asthma. For many students, a self-medication policy is appropriate. However, this should only occur when the school nurse has evaluated each student's readiness for this medical independence.

Susan Olmstead
Freeville, New York

MORE KIDS LEFT BEHIND?

"No Child Left Behind" is certainly a worthy goal, but is it also a setup for failure (March cover story)? The reality is that public schools can never fulfill such a dictum. Not every child would be able to pass the state tests even if we did have all the quality teachers, reasonable student-teacher ratios, energy, time, and resources. Everyone who works in schools is all too aware of this sad truth.

President Bush has repeatedly espoused the "No Child Left Behind" slogan while cutting money for teacher education, pre-school, and after-school programs. He visited a community youth program in Portland, Oregon two months ago, lavished praise on its success, and then returned to Washington and cut the funds for it. What are we to conclude from this kind of leadership?

Despite being faced with classes of 35 and trying to meet the needs of 200 children each day, teachers usually know when a child is "being left behind." We are expected to provide "extra" attention and help to that child. How? When? With what additional resources? I tried, not so long ago, to order a classroom set of paperbacks for my American history class and was told there was not enough money in the textbook budget. I needed the books to bring common knowledge and understanding to a class of students with diverse reading abilities and interests. How many of us have had similar experiences?

Of course, failure of public education to meet the requirements of this lofty slogan establishes the rationale for the change sought by Mr. Bush and his cohorts: the establishment of a voucher system that would largely benefit middle- and upper-class whites and would, in turn, gut efforts to improve the public school system.

"No Child Left Behind" would, in fact, leave many more behind.

Robert Rubinstein
Eugene, Oregon

JUNK FOOD DEBATE

Randall Enos

Neither participant in your debate on junk food presented what leading studies in the health field demonstrate to be healthy diets ("Should schools allow the sale of junk food?" Debate, March). I'm a bit disturbed that an adult working in the field of education would freely state that filling the kids up with refined sugar is in any way benefiting the child. Has Margaret Johnson ever heard of type 2 diabetes or even adolescent obesity? These two afflictions are on the rise amongst teens today, and both are, for the most part, controllable through diet. Banning the sale of junk food from school lunchrooms would protect children from themselves and provide them with the structure of a healthy diet for a lifetime.

Also, although I agreed in principle with Judy Stewart's position against junk food, I have a major issue with her support of milk as a healthy beverage. We have been lulled into thinking that milk does a body good, but studies have shown that dairy products are a leading contributor to types of cancer and forms of heart disease. In fact, countries that have very low per-capita consumption of dairy also have much lower rates of cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis.

David Hyman
Highland Park, New Jersey

I don't think schools should allow the sale of junk food. I'm a lunch lady; I dish up all the food to the kids in third to fifth grade. Too many students pick unhealthy foods—chips, Slim Jims, Fruit Roll Ups, etc. It would be one thing if the students were older, but I'm worried that the younger ones make the wrong choices. We can't force them to eat the good food first, so most of them eat the junk and throw out their lunches.

We shouldn't give the younger students these choices. We only allow them two snacks, but these kids will have a friend buy more for them. That's when I tell them I overheard what they said and won't allow it! But that puts us lunch ladies as the mean ones. If they didn't sell the junk food, we wouldn't have to step in.

Teachers don't like the junk food either. We have one of those sports drink machines in the school. How are we supposed to make students take milk or juice when they say they've already had their sports drink?

Michele Scott
Waterloo, New York

I don't believe we should encourage junk food in schools. How can we preach about proper nutrition and good character if those in charge don't set examples of healthy choices and self-discipline. We are building minds and bodies. Make careful selections about what snack foods are available in schools, and the industry will respond with better products.

Mary Tolmie
Stockton, New Jersey

Poor nutrition is a long-term health concern. Obesity and diabetes are epidemic. Do we just cave in to the detrimental pop culture of kids today? There are plenty of healthy drinks and snacks. Schools should model the best behaviors. Caffeine is physically addictive. What's next, a Starbucks coffee bar in the cafe? I remember teaching at a high school where kids were allowed to smoke in a smoking area. We closed them down due to the health problems. Considering the unhealthiness of junk food, I think it irresponsible for schools to sell it.

Gary Wilson
North East, Maryland

FOCUS ON 'PROVISION'

I was so moved by the excerpt from Matthew Miltich's essay (My Turn, March) that I looked up the entire text in *Thought and Action*. The full essay is profound and needs to be widely read. I loved Miltich's comment that those conducting workshops on assessment methods are rarely assessed, and that teachers are frequently lectured to on the pitfalls of lecturing. The truly radical and profound point that Miltich makes is that rather than "focusing on measurement, data gathering, and quantification," the real focus should be on provision. Educational institutions are virtually starving, as all manner of needs are inadequately provided for. His essay is true at any level of education. I urge all readers to look up the full text of Miltich's essay, "All the Fish in the River: An Essay on Assessment," online at www.nea.org/he/tanda.html.

Suzy Grindrod
Madison, Wisconsin

TEACHERS NEED SUPPORT

I have just read Brenda Powers' letter (Letters, March) and I couldn't agree more. I come from the Philippines, and this is my second year of teaching in the United States.

I get so irritated when teachers are blamed when student test scores are low! American teachers are very hard working and responsible. The students, however, are another matter. In the Philippines, the poorest students try very hard to succeed in school because, for them, it may be the only way out of poverty. (There are no such things as monthly welfare checks.) Poor parents are considered as educational partners, very much responsible for their child's education.

It is time that we held students and parents accountable for students' behavior and performance. Teachers can only do so much—we cannot physically put the pencils in our students' hands and cause them to write or to think. More power to American teachers, who I believe are actually among the best in the world for the unique challenges they face in their classrooms and schools!

Ginna Barreda
Sacramento, California

ZERO TOLERANCE DEBATED

I support Mr. Ehret's stand against zero tolerance ("Is Zero Tolerance a good idea for school discipline and safety?" Debate, February). A couple of years ago in our district, some tough boys caught a quiet boy in the restroom and forced him to take a bomb threat note to the office. They threatened physical harm, which he believed. Under the zero tolerance policy, all the boys were expelled for the year, even the

quiet boy. Did this change his life? You bet. My daughter, who has known him since first grade, agonized over his situation; I have only an idea of how he and his parents agonized over it. Just like mandatory sentences, zero tolerance policies are unjustified.

Karen Crain
Winslow, Arizona

As a middle school science teacher in an inner city, I feel that the goal of zero tolerance policies can be addressed by creating a more extensive network of alternative education sites that address the needs of students who don't function in our traditional settings.

The vast majority of these students are great kids who have experienced too many disadvantages. As a result, these students are not receiving a basic education that will allow them to experience success and learn to function as productive citizens. They need settings that provide more structure.

The big push to use public money for private education would further hamper our efforts and ignores the fact that private schools screen out students who may have behavior problems. Further, private schools don't have to address the needs of a large special education population (and raise the money required to offer programs for them). The public schools in Minnesota have a very large population of students who come to us not speaking English. How did I get to this point from zero tolerance? I think we are all able to follow the connections.

George Malone
St. Paul, Minnesota

Richard Ehret offered the opinion that school officials, like judges, must be free to judge students by their motives, circumstances, and other factors that influenced their behavior. Well, if we hadn't taken prayer out of schools and eliminated discussion of the Ten Commandments and the consequences, the fear of God would still be instilled in our children today. Mr. Ehret comments that his morning prayer is, "God save us from the righteous." Sorry, but I am under the impression that we are supposed to be righteous and a light unto others.

The Columbine shootings and the attacks on September 11 illustrate that we reap what we sow. By not supporting zero tolerance in the family, schools and political realms, our society has become blinded by fear. Zero tolerance is a good moral idea for school discipline and safety as well as in the home and any city.

Melanie Jarrell
Catlettsburg, Kentucky

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Thanks for the good article, "Retiring on Next to Nothing" (News, February). I'm glad that Junita Drisko has launched a campaign to end the unjust and unfair Government Pension Offset/ Windfall Elimination Provision. Inspired by the article, I have written to our two U.S. Senators from Illinois urging them to co-sponsor S. 1523, and to my U.S. Congressman Philip Crane to co-sponsor H.R. 2638. Please keep us informed.

Brigitte Kaiske
Zion, Illinois

LET'S INVITE ALL

In the article, "More Minority Teachers," Sharon Robinson discussed ways to attract "students of color" into teaching by having internships targeted for minority students (Innovation, February). Let us broaden that to encourage all students regardless of background.

We need to look beyond racial classifications, which simply do not exist. According to Shirley Haizlip in *The Sweeter the Juice*, she states, "Some geneticists have said that 95 percent of 'white' Americans have widely varying degrees of black heritage." She also cites *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, which states "75 percent of all African Americans have at least one white ancestor and 15 percent have predominantly white blood lines."

All students are of color; none are transparent. Youngsters just come in different shades. We need to avoid labels that divide us and instead work to increase success in the classroom for all.

Mary Qualler
Elm Grove, Illinois

CLIMATE CONTROL

The discussion on teacher dress codes failed to address classroom climate (Debate, November). My classroom does not have a window, has no air-conditioning and generally lacks any fresh air. If I were to wear more than a polo shirt, I would be a sweaty mess. Working in several schools, I have never had a classroom where wearing a jacket or tie would be bearable.

Dave Marks
Grants Pass, Oregon

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

Keep This Promise!

An appeal to President Bush from "children left behind" in poor schools

Dear Mr. President:

We are not only, as you call us, "children left behind." We also are children forgotten and out of sight. So we appreciate that you and the First Lady have focused attention on the desperate needs of our schools.

Because we are invisible, many people think that we are few in number. The truth is that there are nearly 10 million of us, born into poverty in inner cities and rural backwaters. The schools we attend are underfunded and overcrowded. We are America's neediest students, but we are least likely to have qualified teachers. In many of our schools, as many as 50 to 90 percent of the teachers are not certified.

When you signed the "No Child Left Behind Act" in January, our hopes soared. For us, the single most important reform is the law's requirement that by the year 2006 every teacher in every public school—including ours—must be fully certified and "highly qualified." Our hopes soared again when, in your State of the Union speech, you boldly stated your commitment to this "great goal for America: a qualified teacher in every classroom."

Please understand what this commitment means to us. We look across town to wonderful suburban public schools with modern facilities and teaching staffs that are 100 percent certified, many with M.A.s and Ph.Ds. Students achieve at high levels, and 90 percent or more go on to college.

Do you understand why many of us feel we are being set up to fail?

But in our schools, children are being left behind in droves. In about half the high schools in America's 35 largest cities, the non-graduation rate has risen to 50 percent or higher. It is no coincidence that many schools with 50 percent non-graduation rates also have teaching staffs that are 50 percent non-certified or worse.

Today, our predicament is deepening. States are holding us to the same high academic standards as kids in those gleaming suburban schools. And we must pass the same high-stakes tests in order to get a diploma. In other words, states are raising the bar for student achievement at the same time they are lowering the bar for teacher quality in our schools. Do you understand why many of us feel we are being set up to fail? And why your commitment to a "highly qualified" teacher in every one of our classrooms is so desperately important?

Your commitment has raised our hopes. But more recent events have raised our fears. In January, the "No Child Left Behind Act" promised a modest $776 million in additional funding for teacher quality. But in February, the White House proposed a 2003 budget that cuts funding for teacher quality. The Department of Education's deputy secretary explained that it is time to "take a little bit of a pause."

We respectfully disagree. It is time for urgency. Nationwide, there are nearly 200,000 non-certified teachers, and the law allows only four years to make that zero. This is a monumental challenge.

In 1961, President Kennedy announced an equally historic challenge: to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. The day after the speech, he did not cut NASA's funding; he mobilized the full resources of the federal government to make good on his goal.

Mr. President, our lives are filled with broken promises. We are wary of politicians with empty slogans. But we trust your word. And we know from harsh experience that you are right: to leave no child behind it is necessary to leave no teacher unqualified.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.

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Someone To Lean On

Violence in schools may be prevented if students know they have teachers they can turn to for comfort and advice.

BY RACHEL JUPIN

I met Amy at the beginning of the school year. She was a senior and told me she was going to be in my college writing class. At first, she started coming after school just to talk, and I would listen. Then she started coming after every block, and I'd say, "Go to class!"

She'd talk about her life and about her poetry—she's a wonderful poet. So our relationship became close. I knew she had no real mother figure because she'd been in and out of foster homes for years. I guess you could say her life was pretty messy. So it was very easy for her to talk to me and for me to talk to her. We even exchanged gifts, and she began going to church with me.

One night she came to my house, and I knew something was wrong because I'd never seen her so upset. I said, "Talk to me." And she said, "I can't because if I tell you, you'll call the police." She refused to tell me more, and for the next two weeks she conveniently stayed out of school.

When she finally showed up, it was at church, and she had shaved her head. I told her I was angry and worried, so she stopped by my house and nervously told me the unthinkable: She was involved in a murder-suicide plot similar to the massacre at Columbine High. Hundreds of students and teachers might be killed, and the kids involved planned to take their own lives.

It was all very vague at the time, and getting even a little bit of information was like pulling teeth from Amy. But I kept on—"Is it this? Is it that?"—until I had a good idea of what was being planned.

Horrified, I went to the police the next day. Little did I know that when Amy left my house she'd gone there, too. I think having that time to talk and to think about what it all really meant—to me and to everybody else—made her do this.

Of course, it was just what the police needed. It turns out they'd already been investigating rumors of this plot at the school. Then a janitor found a note that read, "Are you ready for the massacre?"

The police arrested four boys who later were indicted, along with Amy, for conspiracy to commit murder. I am praying the indictment against Amy will be dropped. But in the meantime, I am grateful that she is alive—so grateful, and so proud of her courage, that my husband and I have opened our home to her and are trying to help guide her through these trying times.

It's not what I'd recommend to every teacher, but I do recommend that we all listen more to our students because many of them are in so much pain. Amy is just one of many children who didn't get the foundation they need to help them cope, or know limits, and this was the result.

Laura Barrett

Rachel Jupin, an English teacher at Bedford High School, insists she isn't a hero, just a teacher opening her heart and doing her job.

To this day I still don't truly understand it all—what made her get involved with these boys, or what made the boys feel they had to go this far. Maybe in their own minds they did feel looked down upon by others. These, after all, are kids who dress in baggy clothes, wear dark collars, pierce their ears, dye their hair red and green. They probably figure, "Who wants to be with us?" Yet our school population is so diverse, that one of our main rules is no bullying, no disrepecting others. Teachers stand in the halls to make sure of this. I never saw it, and that's what blows me away.

Still, it doesn't mean our kids aren't hurting or feeling alienated. I can personally relate to children like this—children who are different, or poor, or feeling really insecure—because that was me when I was growing up. I had a single mother who wasn't really there for me, and it was hard. That's probably why it's so easy for me to open my heart to these children.

As teachers I think we should all listen to our guts more—not shy away when we know a kid needs a hug because we fear charges of abuse. Also, I say don't judge so quickly. One of my own sons went through a phase where he wore the mohawk and had the piercings. But he was a great kid. So don't brush a student off if he or she asks, "Can I talk to you?" You may be the only person that child feels comfortable with.

Luckily at our school we have systems in place to help identify problems and help kids deal with issues of alienation. We have a wonderful guidance staff. We have two crisis counselors and peer mentors. We also have the Student Advisory Council. Our kids are told the first day of school that if they have any problems and they feel they can't talk to an adult, go right to the kids.

We've had ongoing professional development, too, and while that's good, I don't think you can be trained to have passion. That's why I don't consider myself a hero for what I've done. I consider myself a teacher who did her job. I listened. I cared. And it made at least one student feel like life was worth living. ✓

Rachel Jupin teaches English at Bedford High School in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

We're working hard to make sure you get a good-looking *NEA Today*, with crisp, clear text, graphics, and photos. That means printing on good paper. But we're also watching our costs.

Paper is one of the three big expenses for *NEA Today*—along with postage and printing. About 14 cents of each issue's costs goes toward buying paper.

Bill Fischer
editor

Unlike many other organizations, NEA buys its own paper through a broker, thus allowing us to buy from various paper manufacturers.

The paper used for *NEA Today* is shipped in wide rolls to our Illinois printer via railroad cars. One issue's worth of paper—approximately 700,000 pounds—fills about six railroad cars.

We try to limit stored paper to no more than one or two issues worth, to avoid ending up with paper that's yellowed or has too much or too little moisture content. Yellow paper means poor reproduction; paper with too high or low moisture content leads to web breaks that can stop the presses.

The paper stock we use is specially manufactured to run on the rotogravure presses we use to print *NEA Today*.

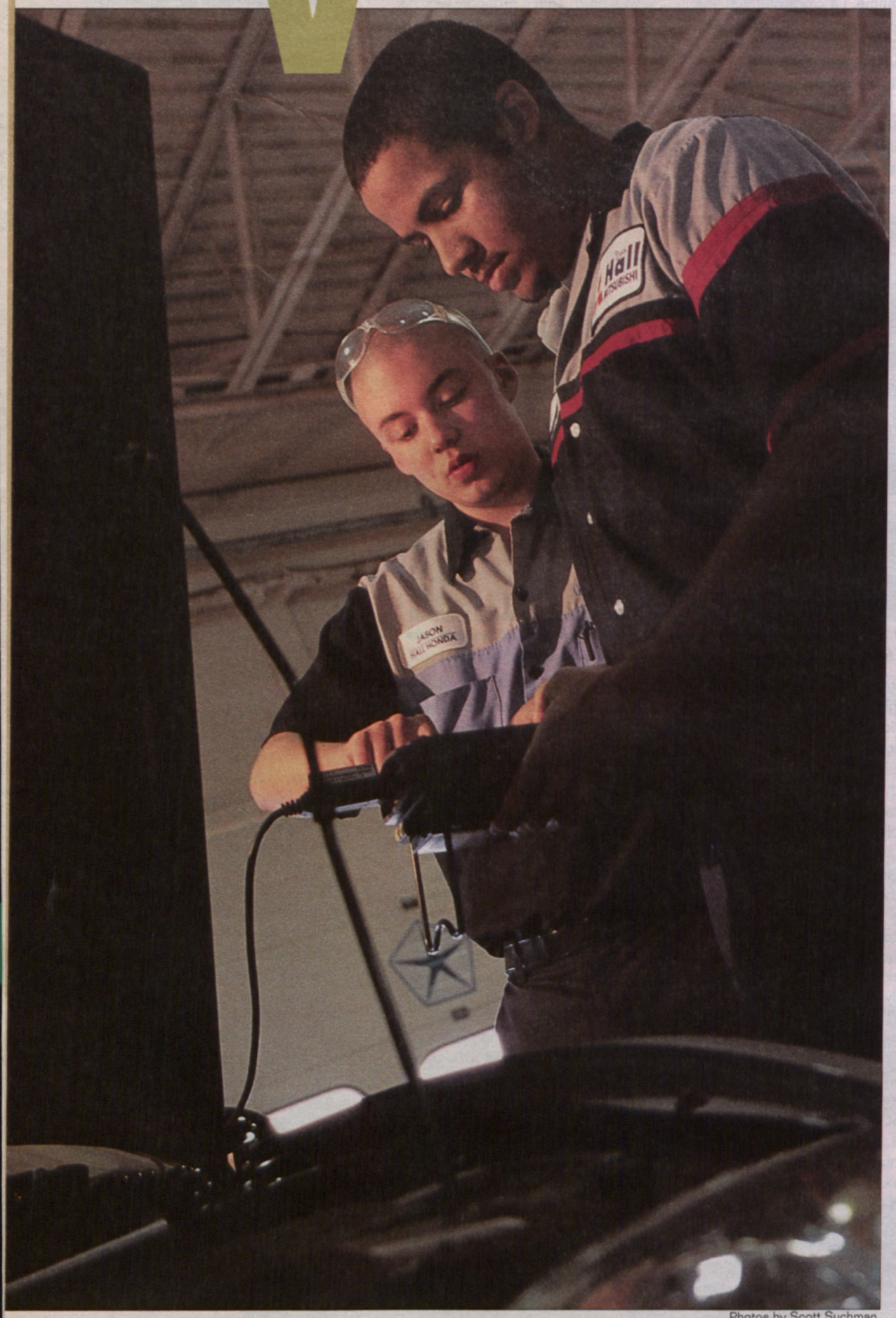
Rotogravure is an old method of printing that still works well but is tailored toward magazines with circulations of a million copies or more. This paper is similar to that used to print *Parade* magazine.

The paper must be very smooth yet strong enough to withstand the pressure of running on high-speed presses. There are different qualities of rotogravure paper. Some feel heavier, have less or more see-through, are smoother, or whiter than the type we use for *NEA Today*. Using a whiter paper improves reproduction, but also costs a lot more than we currently pay, so for the past several years, we've been printing on the same type of paper. That could change as the paper market—currently favorable for paper buyers—changes.

Bill Fischer

Beyond the "V" Word

Vocational education has a new name—and a new strategy for educating students.



Photos by Scott Suchman

At first glance, Mark Maund's Virginia automotive services class fits preconceived images many have about vocational education: His students are working on cars and learning a trade.

But a closer look reveals the depth of knowledge his students acquire. In addition to learning about carburetors and braking systems, they learn computer technology, knowledge they'll need to work on high-end automobiles. At the same time, they're building their math and English skills and reinforcing other academic subjects.

At the end of the year, these students will come away with the foundation they need to pursue a fulfilling—and highly lucrative—career, plus an industry certification and 18 college credits.

This is voc-ed in the 21st century.

Vocational education is now called career and technical education (CTE), "and the word 'career' is underlined in my mind," says Maund, who teaches at the Virginia Beach Technical and Career Education Center.

Courses focus on preparing students for careers, not just getting jobs. Students gain practical skills and intense academic instruction that prepare them simultaneously to enter the work force and college.

Changes in the workplace have caused career and technical educators to strengthen their programs, says Dianne Mondry, president of the Association for Career and Technical Education. Courses are more rigorous, both academically and technically, and increasing numbers of secondary programs offer college credit, Mondry says. About 11,000 comprehensive high schools and 1,400 "vo-tech" centers provide programs to 11 million students nationwide.

Maund's students must balance the two-year automotive services program with their general academic requirements. They receive intensive instruction in engine repair, electronics, and automobile operating systems. At the same time, students spend their evenings, weekends, and summers working with mentors at local dealerships. By the time they graduate, students have their certification from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence and a semester's

worth of college credits.

Maund's students then go to work for one of the 43 dealerships in the area, which pay for students to complete their associate degrees. All enroll in either two- or four-year college programs, and 90 percent still are working in the industry or furthering their education.

Salaries for new graduates start at $7.50 per hour but can jump to $100 per hour within two years, Maund says. It is not uncommon for master technicians to earn more than $100,000 a year at luxury auto shops. Most dealerships also provide health insurance and retirement plans, Maund adds.

WHERE THE JOBS ARE

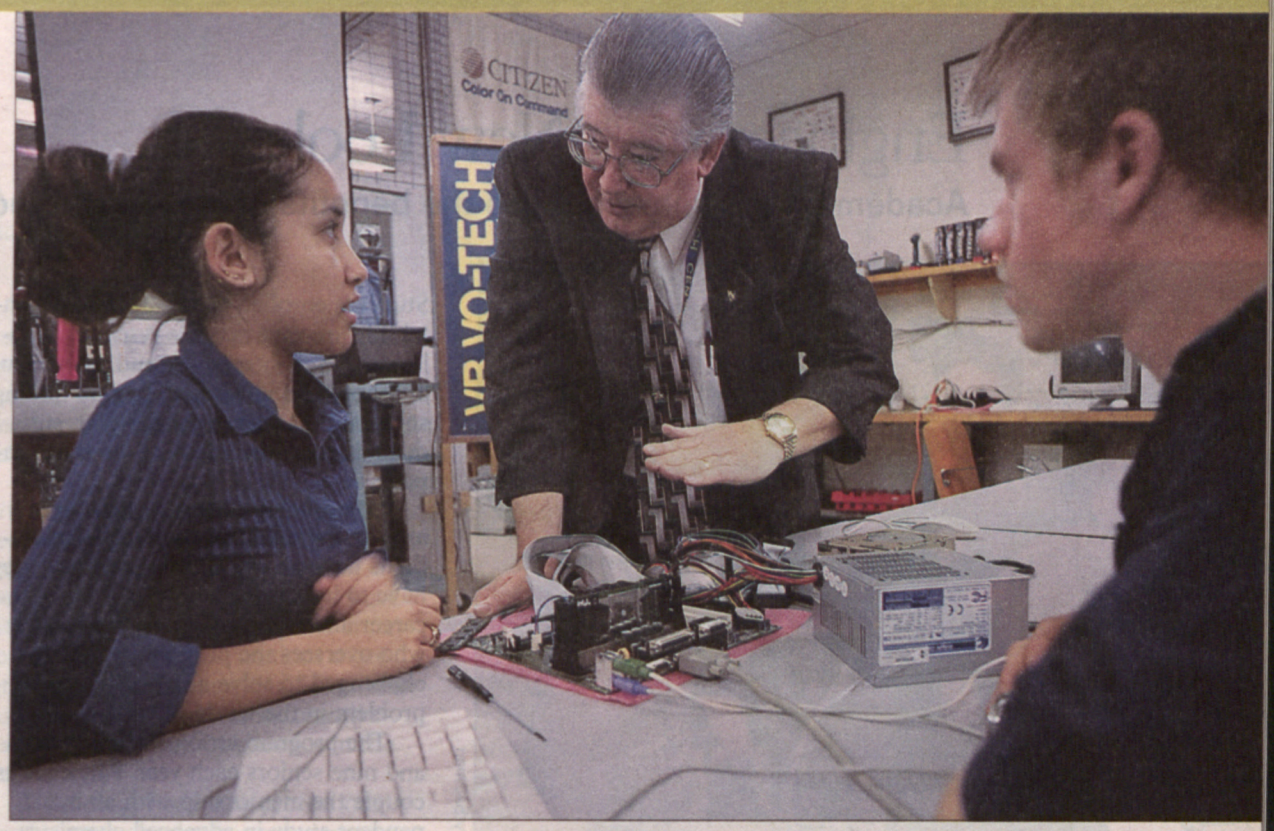
Career and technical education keeps pace with the labor market by preparing students for newly created jobs and ones vacated by retiring employees.

Automotive services, for instance, is the third-fastest growing occupation among those that require an associate degree or postsecondary vocational award, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Bureau projects there will be 151,000 jobs available between now and 2010.

But career and technical education also prepares students to work in new and emerging industries.

Down the hall from Maund, Linda Lavender specializes in one of those emerging fields: information technology.

Students in Lavender's two-year network administration program learn how to manage a computer network, provide user support, and install and replace computer hardware. They earn eight college credits and can become certified Novell and Microsoft systems administrators. Many students pursue additional training to become certified systems engineers, a position that commands an even higher salary. About 75 percent of Lavender's students enroll in two- or four-year colleges. Students often work as systems administrators while they pursue their degrees, she says.



"As a technician, you have to stay up with the hardware that works inside and with the computer, and you also have to stay up with the software," says Virginia member George Fausel.

"When we talk about career and technical education, I never understood the difference between the academic college-bound students and my students," Lavender says. "We're all out for the same goal. The students all need to get jobs in the workplace."

CHANGES IN INDUSTRY

To stay current, career and technical educators must regularly update their courses to respond to trends in business. IT courses have seen the greatest increase in student enrollment, says ACTE's Mondry, which isn't surprising since the top five fastest growing jobs focus on computer systems, software, and applications.

Courses increasingly emphasize technology, a trend that reflects the dramatic changes seen in the workplace, says Floyd McKinney, director of the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education.

"In fact," he says, "you will not be around long if you don't pay attention to the technology in your area."

Brian Cave has witnessed first-hand how far career and technical education has come. When he enrolled in the printing program at the Virginia Beach Technical and Career Education Center in the 1970s, the course focused almost exclusively on offset printing, he says. Now Cave teaches the course, and his emphasis is on printing in the digital age. His students also learn basic graphic design and desktop publishing. Graduates qualify for entry-level jobs in the printing industry. But Cave encourages his students to go to college and work toward managing a print shop, which commands a higher salary.

George Fausel has also seen dramatic changes in his electronics and computer repair course during his 15 years at the Technical Center.

Not only has the curriculum changed, but Fausel's students can earn an industry certification in computer repair, a perk that did not exist 15 years ago. His students also earn between 16 and 18 college credits, which they can put toward an associate degree. After they earn the two-year degree, students can enroll at Old Dominion University and earn a bachelor's after two more years.

Left: Students in Mark Maund's automotive services class learn the diagnostic skills they need to repair high-end automobiles. Below: Linda Lavender teaches students how to administer a computer network.

DOWN THE ROAD

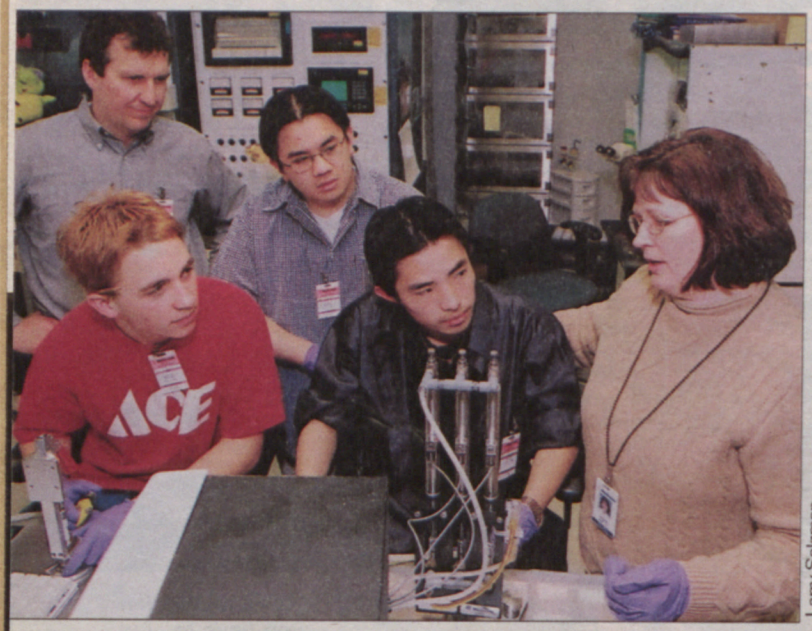
The future is bright for career and technical education, says ACTE's Mondry. Courses offer high academic and technical standards and prepare students for careers and four-year degrees. Meanwhile, businesses receive well-educated and technically-skilled employees. McKinney at NDCCTE believes career and technical education is becoming a more respected option for learners. Lavender in Virginia Beach agrees.

"Most people think technical education is for the student who can't do it in the home school," Lavender says. "That's not true at all. This is for the student who wants to focus in a certain area. We are not alternative education. We are enhanced education." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Engineering a New Look

Academic high-achievers see the benefits of career and technical education.



Larry Salzman

Students from Brooklyn Center High School work with Fran Bartley of Medtronic, while teacher Paul Mueller observes.

When most people envision a career and technical education class, the image of students in white lab coats performing biomedical research doesn't necessarily come to mind. But that vision is a reality for a group of high schoolers in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, outside Minneapolis.

A select group of advanced level chemistry students at Brooklyn Center High School work side by side with research scientists at Medtronic, a medical technology firm that develops and manufactures medical devices such as pacemakers and defibrillators.

Students enrolled in the "research mentorship" receive specific research problems from their mentors and spend time at school and in Medtronic's lab finding solutions. At the end of the year, students present their findings to the company.

"Mentorship programs have been around for years, but with this the students have an engineering problem they have to help solve," says Paul Mueller, a career and technical education teacher who oversees the program. "They are challenged to solve a real research problem in the world of work."

The program enrolls between four and nine seniors each year. Participants couple the mentorship with an independent study in advanced chemistry and must take physics and calculus as well. Most already have expressed an interest in a science or engineering career, and all rank at the upper level of their graduating class, Mueller says.

The caliber of Mueller's students reflects a new trend in career and technical education.

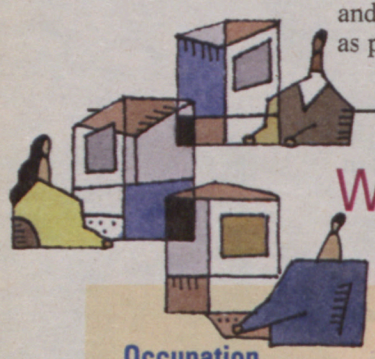
More and more "academically gifted" students are seeking out technical programs. Between 1982 and 1998, the percentage of students who earned three or more vocational credits and completed advanced coursework in math increased by 16 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The number of students taking both technical and college-prep courses is rising as well. In 1990, only 19 percent of career and technical students followed a college-prep curriculum, defined as at least four years of English and three years each of math and science, according to the U.S. Department of Education. By 1998, 45 percent were taking those classes.

Today's career and technical education students often are in the top 5 percent of their graduating classes, according to the National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education. For instance, the winners of the 2000 All-American Vocational Student Awards had a median grade point average of 3.35 on a 4.0 scale. And nearly two-thirds of all high school graduates of career and technical education programs pursue some form of postsecondary education, according to the Association for Career and Technical Education.

Philadelphia has retooled its CTE programs to appeal not only to "middle-of-the-pack" students, but to high achievers as well; while in New Jersey lawsuits have been filed on behalf of high-achieving students whose home districts have sought to prevent them from attending technical schools.

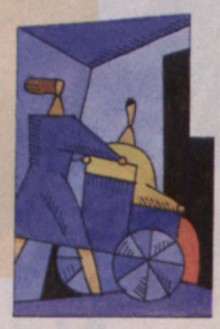
"This is 21st century career and technical education," Mueller says. "It's interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, and it's designed to reach out and involve all students." ✔

—Kristen Loschert



Where the Jobs Are—The Top 10 Fastest Growing Occupations

Occupation	Number of Jobs		Percent Change	Education or Training Required
	2000	2010		
Computer software engineers, applications	380,000	760,000	100	Bachelor's degree
Computer support specialist	506,000	996,000	97	Associate degree
Computer software engineers, systems software	317,000	601,000	90	Bachelor's degree
Network and computer systems administrators	229,000	416,000	82	Bachelor's degree
Network systems and data communications analysts	119,000	211,000	77	Bachelor's degree
Desktop Publishers	38,000	63,000	67	Postsecondary vocational award
Database Administrators	106,000	176,000	66	Bachelor's degree
Personal and home care aides	414,000	672,000	62	Short-term on-the-job training
Computer systems analysts	431,000	689,000	60	Bachelor's degree
Medical assistants	329,000	516,000	57	Moderate-term on-the-job training



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Q&A

All About Lifelong Learning

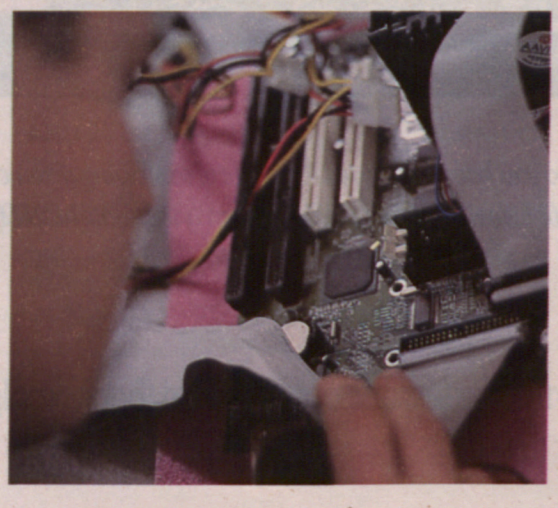
Dianne Mondry is president of the Association for Career and Technical Education, the largest national group dedicated to advancing education that prepares youth and adults for careers. ACTE, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, serves a membership of more than 38,000 that includes teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, university professors, state and local employees, and students at middle, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

Why is vocational education now called career and technical education?

The name "career and technical education" really better reflects what is happening in the field and the direction we are setting for the future. Our courses are more challenging, more academic, and more technical to reflect the skills of business and industry. It's a unifying voice for a broad diverse field of education programs.

What is its purpose?

The purpose or mission of career and technical education is to provide students with the opportunity to learn academic and technical skills, explore different career options, and discover ways to balance life and work roles. We're about lifelong learning, and we recognize that there cannot be dead ends at any level of education.



How has the area changed?

Our programs change as industry changes, so we are constantly upgrading our curricula. In addition to technical skills instruction, our programs emphasize the soft skills needed in the workplace, skills like teamwork, ethics, and interpersonal and human relationship skills.

How do you keep up with the changing job market?

All of our career and technical education programs have active advisory committees that reflect the business or industry of the program. This partnership with the business community is inherent in all career and technical education programs. We have partnerships where industry provides curricula, professional development resources, and sometimes equipment to help our teachers and students remain current and prepare for future industry needs. Teachers also remain active in the occupational areas in which they teach.

What role does technology play?

Technology has a huge influence, not only in what we teach, but on how we teach. Our teachers and students have the opportunity to use computer smart boards that make presentations more interactive, simulations, and 3D animation programs that allow automotive teachers to perform diagnostics in the classroom.

Technology has made professional development absolutely necessary so our teachers keep up and integrate the use of technology in the classroom. I really don't know of any area in any program that does not use technology at some time.

What issues does career and technical education face?

We're concerned with quality teaching, which may be defined differently in career and technical education. We want the best teachers teaching our students, so we have to figure out how we're going to get them and make sure they meet a standard of quality.

Another issue is the impact of standards. Many states still feel that the only way to improve student academic achievement is to give more of the same, that one-size-fits-all approach, instead of finding ways to help students succeed. We believe in strong academics, but also that they be taught in a contextual learning environment.

What does the future hold for career and technical education?

Career and technical education can be a partner in economic development. Often businesses will relocate because of the quality of the career and technical education in an area. The economic engine is driven by a well-prepared workforce and the preparation of that workforce requires strong academic skills, good work ethics, specific technical skills, and the abilities to communicate, work with others, solve problems, and use information. Career and technical education can do all of that.

ACTE

Dianne Mondry of the Association for Career and Technical Education notes that her field is especially responsive to the technical changes in industry.

Resources

- The College of Education at the University of Central Florida has a comprehensive Web resource list on career and technical education. The list includes general information sites as well as links to recent legislation, international vocational education interests, and career information. Go to http://reach.ucf.edu/~voced/mainresources.htm.

- Teachers whose students enter the workforce shortly after high school will find the Workforce Preparation Curriculum Database especially helpful. The site offers curricula to help teachers prepare their students for first-time jobs and help them navigate the transition between school and work. For more on workforce preparation, visit www.ncrcd.iastate.edu/ workprep/welcome.html.

- DiscoverySchool.com offers links to the Automotive Encyclopedia, the *Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, and more. The site provides resources for students enrolled in career and technical education classes and is a valuable guide for teachers who want to learn about the latest trends and issues. DiscoverySchool.com is located at http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/vocation.html.

- For more information about the Virginia Beach Technical and Career Education Center, check out the school's Web site at www.techcenter.vbcps.k12.va.us/index2.htm.

Other Useful Web Sites:

National Dissemination and Research Centers for Career and Technical Education
www.nccte.com

Association for Career and Technical Education
www.acteonline.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
www.ericacve.org

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education
www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/

International Technology Education Association
www.iteawww.org/

Learning. Cleverly

How do you get a classroom full of restless kids interested in geometry? Pique their interest and their enthusiasm with Apple's revolutionary iMovie.™

"Do you know how to tell the height of something if you can't reach the top?" Maria Blasko's students learn a valuable lesson in geometry.

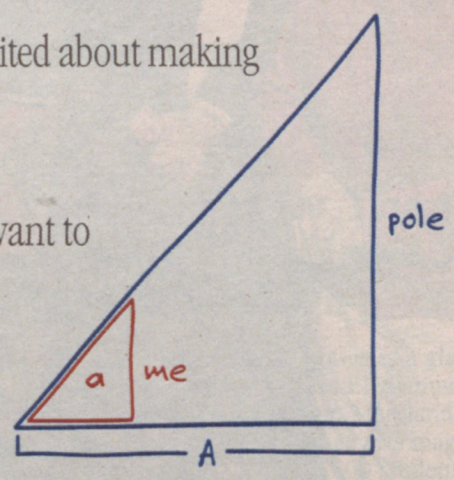
Maria Blasko, a math teacher in East Palo Alto, California, uses iMovie to take lessons out of the textbook and give them real-world applications. "With the 'Similar Triangles' movie, I took a concept that can be very hard for students to grasp in the classroom environment and took it outside, to get the students involved in the process. Instead of listening to me

By filming the "Similar Triangles" lesson, Maria Blasko brings new life to an old subject.

disguised as a movie.

iMovie uses simple drag-and-drop technology. So you can focus on teaching, not editing.

tell them about the relationship between similar triangles of differing size, they experienced it. And because we were filming the process they really focused on the assignment and became excited about making the movie. The best part is that once the lesson is done the students want to watch it again and again. So it really reinforces what they've learned." In short, iMovie, combined with inspired teaching, is a formula for student success. To see how Maria and other teachers are using iMovie to energize lessons and connect to their students, call 1-800-800-APPL or visit www.apple.com/teachimovie.



Ms. Blasko built a stronger relationship with her students by combining a passion for teaching with the power of iMovie.

Think different.

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A Tough Law Deserves Tough Questions

Four Maryland elementary teachers examine the new "No Child Left Behind Act" and tell *NEA Today* exactly what they think.

Photos by Sandy Schaeffer

In January, President Bush signed a bill reauthorizing and amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), dubbed by its sponsors the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. As NEA members learn more about ESEA's sweeping provisions, they've got a lot to say.

Recently, four teachers from the pre-K-2 New Hampshire Estates Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland aired their views on ESEA in an interview with NEA Today. *Here's an excerpt from that interview with Matilde Arciniegas (first grade ESOL/reading/writing teacher), Melissa Landa (writing specialist), Chris Manzone (reading specialist), and Alexis Stern (first grade teacher):*

The No Child Left Behind Act has a 12-year goal to make every student 100-percent proficient in state reading and math tests. Any thoughts on that?
We agree that we like the name of the law. But we have some questions about its objectives.

Just what is "proficiency?"

Everybody has to read and do a certain amount of math, but does everybody have to take trigonometry?

We're thinking of the ESOL children who come to our schools from countries all over the world and have an interrupted education—they may arrive in high school with barely a fifth-grade education. At what level is the federal government expecting these children to perform in the end?

Under this law, a struggling school in the first year of an improvement plan must, where state law allows, provide public school "choice" to parents. Will it be possible to leave no child behind?
If you have a situation where parents can start pulling their kids out of these schools one by one, there *are* kids who are going to be left behind.

Laura Bush recently testified in Congress on early cognitive development, what happens before kids come to elementary school. She really honed in on the fact that her children learned on her lap, as she read books to them.

That's something a lot of the students in our school don't have. We have to play catch-up with them in preschool or kindergarten, making up for hours of experience they are lacking when they start school.

"If you have a situation where parents can start pulling their kids out of struggling schools one by one, there *are* kids who are going to be left behind."
—Staffers from New Hampshire Estates Elementary

The new law requires states to administer annual reading and math tests of their own design in grades 3-8. Your reaction?
Which tests are states going to use, and how will they compare those measures?

An educator named Ellin Keene, whom we know and love, once said, "If you teach the children how to think, they're going to do well on a test." But this isn't true if the test doesn't provoke thought.

Will these be tests with truly thought-probing questions that require the children to use life skills—analyzing, thinking, writing, and reading? Or, will they have narrowly focused, minutiae-types of questions that have nothing to do at all with thinking?

The danger is that some states will choose tests that are cheaper to implement rather than performance-based, critical-thinking, thought-provoking tests that are much harder to score.

What are your thoughts generally about testing?
Tests are important. We all know that you need SATs to get into college. But we get into trouble when we use the information that tests give us to judge teachers and schools.

We know that appropriate assessments can drive instruction based on student needs and be very helpful, but standardized multiple choice tests don't do this.

The standardized tests that exist in elementary school do not reflect what the kids actually know and how well they've been taught.

These tests don't measure an individual child's progress. They just measure the child against the norm.

In our school, we see children who don't have the advantages our own children have, yet these children make unbelievable progress.

Our school has a revolving door. Many of the children in grades 3-5 are not the same children who started with us in kindergarten.

Our school is changing all the time. Unless the individual test score follows the child and can be made useful for that child's teacher, it doesn't make sense.

Teachers are very anxious about the whole testing situation. There's a small fear that someday we might be forced to change our teaching in ways we don't believe in, just so we can achieve those test scores—which may not really be measuring how much children are learning.

Most of us believe that standardized tests *really* measure socioeconomics. They reflect who the children are and whether they have educated parents at home supporting them in school, rather than what is being taught and learned at school.

Those are strong opinions. Let's hear your views on the "teacher quality" aspects of the new law.
We want to have stricter standards for teachers. To have a standardized notion of what being a certified teacher is about is really, really important.

But the certification and being able to pass exams does not really tell you if this is a wonderful teacher, because there's a part of teaching that is an art that involves your inner self, your ability to inspire children.

You must also ask: Does this teacher understand children? Does this teacher understand the art of teaching?

Then you must ensure that this teacher has proper mentoring and proper placement.

How do the people who sponsored this law think they're going to get fully certified, highly qualified teachers to come into this hostile environment?

We know teachers with less than five years' experience who are already burned out—they're tired of the testing, testing, testing. Some of them say: "I just want to teach. I just want to be with the kids." They're very frustrated.

And how are you going to get teachers and principals to go to these buildings that are under school improvement plans if test scores alone are driving the success or failure of a school?

What will it really take to turn around struggling schools?
The problem is not the goals and the testing and all that. It's delivery of services.

We know that some children do not come to school with the same assets to learn. And yet we give everybody six hours a day of instruction across the board.

Somehow, we have to replace what kids don't have in their home. The only difference between our students and students in more affluent parts of our county is their breadth of experience—and somebody being there to guide them through that.

If we could design a program or a school, we would have these children there until six o'clock. And most afternoons would be spent in a museum or nature center or in some enriching kind of experience. Along with that, we would do some remediation.

We would work collectively as a team, and we'd work collaboratively to see how we could bring a child to the next level. ✔

To read the full text of the No Child Left Behind Act, go to http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c107:h.r.1.enr:. For specific ESEA information from NEA, call 866/373-ESEA (3732).

Speaking their minds on the newly signed "No Child Left Behind Act" are, clockwise from top left, Chris Manzone, Alexis Stern, Melissa Landa, and Matilde Arciniegas.

ESEA's Student Testing and Teacher Quality Provisions

These are just two provisions of the newly reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act that will directly affect either you or a colleague:

• **A 12-year goal to make every student "proficient" on state reading and math tests.** By the 2005-06 school year, each state must administer annual reading and math tests of its own design in grades 3-8, and once between grades 9-12. The tests must be aligned to state standards and must include multiple measures of achievement.

State achievement tests must measure both the performance of a whole school and that of disadvantaged "subgroups," to ensure that no single group of students is allowed to consistently underperform.

A school that displays a lack of "adequate yearly progress" will be given technical assistance and placed on a long-term improvement schedule with progressively stronger corrective measures, culminating in school "restructuring" or "reconstitution" in the seventh year.

• **Strong teacher quality provisions.** Beginning with the 2002-03 school year, each district receiving Title I funds (to help disadvantaged children gain basic and advanced skills) must ensure that all teachers in a program supported by Title I are "highly qualified"—meaning they have been fully certified or licensed under state law and have demonstrated competence.

Moreover, all new teachers entering the profession must take a written test. And every state must develop a plan to ensure that all teachers (not just those supported by Title I) teaching "core academic subjects" are highly qualified no later than the end of the 2005-06 school year.

NEA lobbied hard—and won—continued support for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which had been slated to lose its federal funding. ✔

School Profile

"We Know These Children Need Much More"

■ **New Hampshire Estates at a glance:** New Hampshire Estates Elementary School, in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a pre-K-2 reading/language arts magnet school with more than 500 students.

The school is both socioeconomically and culturally diverse, serving families from more than 35 countries. Class sizes are small—14 students—and there are additional resources because of high student needs. Some 80 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced cost lunches.

■ **A source of pride:** "We teach kids who are facing unbelievable challenges of poverty how to read and write," says one New Hampshire Estates teacher.

"We have a staff of people who want to teach children," she adds, "and the school has always exuded a nurturing atmosphere. Kids are all happy, teachers are all happy, and I think we do a good job of teaching them to read and write and do math. When the kids come in and they're waiting to go down to their classrooms, they're sitting in the hall reading books."

■ **What it takes:** "I'm a writing specialist," says Melissa Landa. "I'm probably the only one in the county. In fact, we've got all sorts of specialists. Our positions exist because we've got the funding, we've got the resources, and we know that these children need much more."

Is Your School Budget Going Up in Smoke?

New study shows that 'economic development' tax breaks burn up money needed for education.

As you approach (shudder) Tax Time, you're probably scrounging for every little deduction you can find. But regrettably, the shrewdest write-offs out there—through vehicles like property tax abatements, tax increment financing, and enterprise zones—won't appear in your tax preparation guide.

These gimmicks are just a handful of the creative "incentives" offered by states and cities, now totaling more than $49 billion a year in either expenditures or fore-gone revenues, to lure economic development—often from *other* states and cities.

This intergovernmental competition is starting to eat into some state education budgets, erosion that has become more evident in this time of recession and steep revenue shortfalls.

Economic development incentives make perfect business sense when a company is struggling and needs a tax break to survive, thrive, and sustain local employment.

But when these incentives are simply used to lure a business from one state or city to another, "it's a lose-lose situation for education and other public services," says Ed Hurley, an education finance expert in NEA Research.

"In an ideal world, we wouldn't allow tax abatements," Hurley adds. "In the meantime, let's focus on attracting new economic investment to our communities by offering good schools and a skilled workforce."

Ironically, many state and local economic development boosters already top their lists of "business climate" features with glowing promises of a "highly-skilled labor force" and "excellent schools and training facilities," while simultaneously granting tax breaks that can *undermine* educational quality.

That's just one finding in a report on how tax giveaways impact school funding, recently completed for NEA Research by the Good Jobs First project of the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. This nonprofit, nonpartisan organization—which admits a bias towards "tax fairness"—researches the effects of tax systems on taxpayers at all income levels.

The Good Jobs First study also finds that costly tax giveaways rarely determine where companies locate jobs.

That's because state and local taxes are deductible from federal corporate taxes. And besides, the report notes, "state and local taxes represent only 2 percent to 3 percent of a typical business's costs, compared with basics such as transportation, energy, proximity to suppliers, proximity to customers, and access to critical inputs—especially sufficient *skilled labor*."

Regardless of these facts, state and local tax gimmicks just keep mushrooming.

In 2000, Ohio had 3,180 low-tax "enterprise zone" agreements in place, notes Ohio Education Association research consultant Andy Jewell.

And in Alabama, corporate tax-break legislation has been simply "endless," laments Alabama Education Association research manager Bill Hanebuth, who has seen every gimmick from employee payroll tax rebates for an auto manufacturer to a recent attempt—stopped by AEA—to grant a $400 million tax break to a power company.

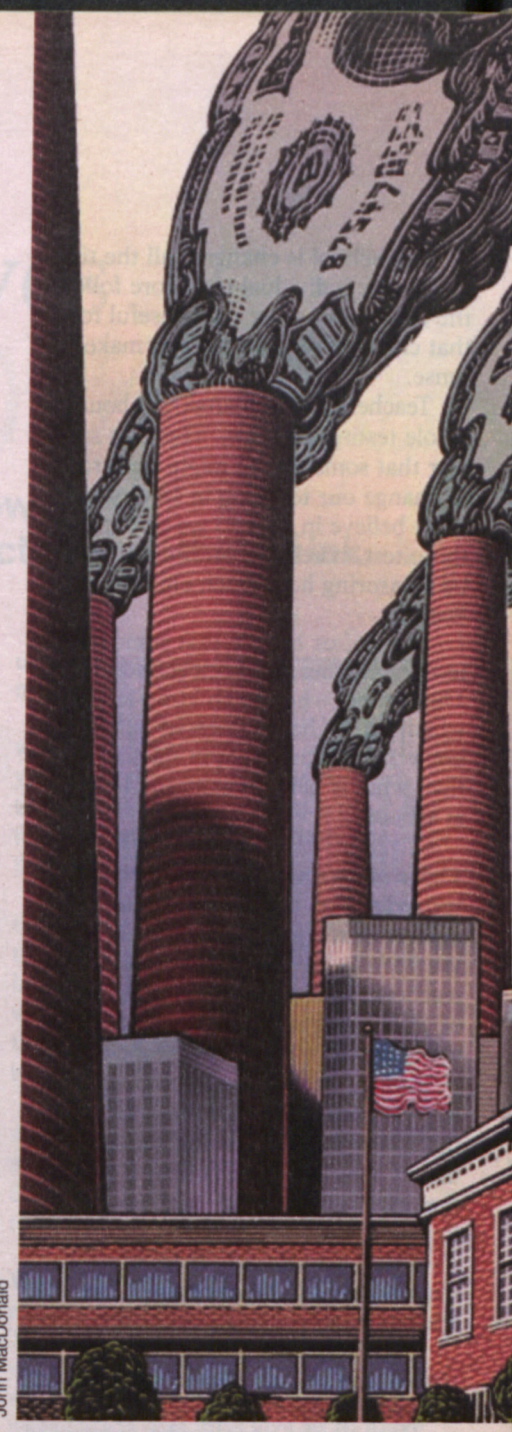
The Good Jobs First/NEA Research report (not yet released to the public) focuses on tax breaks that affect the largest single source of school funding: the property tax.

In Ohio alone, the study finds, property tax abatements and tax increment financing (TIF)—an "exemption of the value of real property improvements" over a set number of years—reduced or diverted school revenue by $102 million in 1999. And Montana schools lose about $16 million a year to such subsidies, the report adds.

Some Smart Solutions

How can the education community challenge tax subsidies that harm school funding—at a time when many state and local budgets have slipped into the red?

Here, from the Good Jobs First



John MacDonald

> **"Educators should stand up and declare that they are 'business climate crusaders,' because they are the ones who help build the skilled labor force that so many employers desire."**
>
> —Greg LeRoy, director
> Good Jobs First project

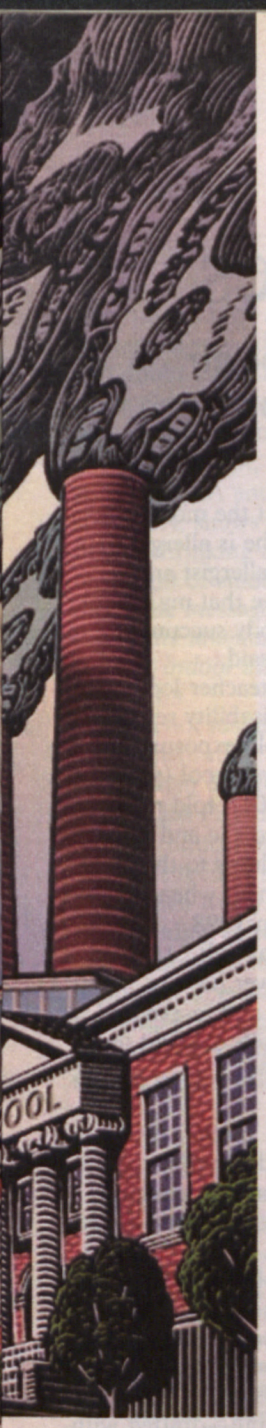
THE BOTTOM LINE

PROFICIENCY RIDDLE: Proficiency standards under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act vary so widely that a student's "proficiency" may simply depend on where he or she lives. www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=23proficient.h21.

SCHOOLS TOO BIG: A comprehensive national survey of high school teachers says teachers in schools with more than 1,500 students report far more serious education problems than those in smaller schools. www.publicagenda.org/aboutpa/aboutpa3qq.htm.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP: A new report concludes that closing the achievement gap will require placing the best teachers in low-performing schools, and proposes tax credits for these teachers. www.aasa.org/issues_and_ insights/issues_dept/ challenges.htm.

TOOTH-CARE REFORM: The American Dental Association says exclusive brand-name vending machine contracts used in many schools are luring kids to sugary drinks that promote tooth decay. www.ada.org/public/media/newsrel/0202/nr-05.html.



folks and NEA researchers, are some reasonable approaches to the problem:

■ **Shield school revenues from corporate tax subsidies.** The best way to do this is to prohibit the abatement or diversion of the school portion of property taxes. A handful of states already do this.

■ **Give school boards a formal say in subsidy decision making.** The Good Jobs First report strongly recommends that school boards be given veto power over abatements and tax increment financing and that school boards be "provided with enough advance information about subsidies to make informed decisions."

■ **Improve disclosure of business tax breaks.** In Ohio, notes OEA staffer Jewell, "there's no central source of information on tax abatement programs, even though the state Department of Development has some oversight. They only know what local tax authorities report to them."

And in Alabama, charges AEA staffer Hanebuth, industrial development boards actually meet in secret and waive taxes.

States should measure the impact of subsidies on school revenue, the Good Jobs First report stresses. "In order to do this, reliable data on property tax abatements and TIF must be collected and aggregated by school district, county, and state."

■ **Ask questions and be aggressive.** "I tell Association members to contact their local tax authority—at the city, county, or township level—to find out if they have entered into tax abatement agreements with companies," says OEA's Jewell. "I also encourage members to talk to politicians to get a picture of abatements granted in their community."

AEA's Hanebuth thinks it's important to be tougher *yet*, and for a good reason: Corporate tax breaks have helped punch a multimillion dollar hole in Alabama's $4.5 billion education budget.

"We have full-time AEA staff—including our own staff tax attorney—tracking tax legislation all the time," Hanebuth points out. "We're usually the only group from the education community that testifies when these bills come to committee, and we read each and every bill."

■ **Point out that somebody has to pay for the pressures of economic growth.** "If new companies don't pay their property tax for 20 years, who is paying for new public costs—like streets, sewers, and schools—generated by the population growth?" asks Good Jobs First project director Greg LeRoy. "It's just homeowners and small businesspeople, and that's not fair."

■ **Speak out for education as an economic development tool.** Education unions also have a role to play in this debate, the Good Jobs First report emphasizes. It concludes: "As the front-line workers who see the impact of overcrowding and other effects of underfunded schools, teachers and classified employees can articulate the direct impact subsidies have on tomorrow's workforce."

Greg LeRoy says it even better than his report: "Teachers and other public education advocates should stand up and declare that they are 'business climate crusaders,' because they are the ones who help build the skilled labor force that so many employers desire." ✔

Greg LeRoy will be a workshop speaker at NEA's 'Conference on Quality Schools and Education Funding: Merging the Agendas,' to be held May 8-10 in Denver, Colorado. For info, call NEA Research at 202/822-7763 or E-mail Smanalaysay@nea.org.

Your Dues Did It

NEA Argues Against Vouchers In Supreme Court

Outside, voucher supporters and opponents jostled for position in front of the cameras. Inside, attorneys for the two sides threw sharp jabs at each other—while answering a rapid-fire barrage of pointed questions from the Justices.

It was a high-profile, high-stakes case before the United States Supreme Court. And on February 20, the issue was the six-year-old private school tuition voucher plan in Cleveland, Ohio.

"It's a mathematical certainty that almost all of the students [who receive vouchers] will end up going to religious schools," argued Bob Chanin, NEA general counsel and lead attorney for the anti-voucher Cleveland parents.

Justice David Souter echoed that idea, asking, "Doesn't it suggest that there is something specious about this notion that it's a matter of wide-open choice?"

The case came down to intent versus effect. Attorneys for the State of Ohio, the Bush administration, and pro-voucher parents argued that the purpose of vouchers is to improve education. The anti-voucher legal argument was that the effect of the plan is to divert resources to religious instruction and worship.

Chanin argued that parents play a "ritualistic role" in moving money from the state to religious schools. The voucher program is distinct from other choice options in Cleveland, including magnet and charter schools, because they do not charge tuition.

A ruling in the case is expected in June.

In Their Own Words

Education: A Tool of Economic Development

"Investment in public education has also been one of the tools of economic development and should be recognized as such. Thus, funding public education and education development packages should be complements, not competitors, in this effort.

"What is needed is a more careful evaluation of the growing number of incentive packages in a true public cost/benefit framework so that the opportunity costs of forgone revenues and the additional demands on public infrastructure (including schools) are given appropriate weight in the decision process."

—From a March 2000 report completed for the South Carolina School Boards Association

SCHOOL SPENDING: **A new poll says more than two-thirds of Americans would support incurring larger federal deficits in order to improve K-college education. www.cef.org/press/.**

HEALTH ED: **A new report shows how local education funds, communities, and families are working to promote and expand school sexual health programs. www.publiceducation.org/cgi-bin/downloadmanager/publications/p100.asp.**

ONLINE ACTIVISTS: **Computer-savvy young people are leading the way in online public activism, working through the Web for everything from world peace to better school funding. www.whatkidscando.org/studentwork/onlineactivists.html.**

ENRON AND RETIREMENT: **Teacher and educator pension funds nationwide have lost hundreds of millions of dollars due to the collapse of Enron Corporation stock. www.edweek.com/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=20briefs.h21.**

'Dream' Jobs Turn to Nightmares

Connecticut NEA members tell lawmakers of the need for cleaner air in their schools. The goal: Pass tough indoor air quality legislation.

Photos by Mike Lydick, CEA

Milford teachers Nancy Carter, left, and Katherine Anderson tell state legislators how building conditions made them progressively sicker.

They work, or once worked, in the state reputed for having the nation's toughest teacher standards, and their comments to state lawmakers in February reflected pride—even enthusiasm—in their chosen careers. This was Connecticut at its best.

"I can honestly say that teaching kindergarten has been as much a hobby as it has been my job," testified Milford NEA member Katherine Anderson, while member Ellen Ginter spoke of stepping into her "dream job" last year as a counselor and department chairperson at Amity Regional Senior High School in Woodbridge.

"I was very invested in a career I would have described as dynamic, multifaceted, and very fulfilling," added retired Fairfield special ed teacher Joellen Lawson of her 23-year career as a classroom teacher, seminar leader, educational consultant, and tutor.

But the bulk of these educators' remarks, made at a joint Education Committee hearing on a proposed "Act Concerning Indoor Air Quality [IAQ] in Schools," showed Connecticut at its absolute worst.

Anderson, Ginter, Lawson, and three other teachers took turns describing wretched school building conditions—caused by factors such as air and soil contamination; mold, asbestos, or lead exposure; or poor ventilation—that have made them and students ill.

This moving testimony, coordinated by the Connecticut Education Association/NEA, generated lots of tears in the usually staid hearing chamber.

Anderson and Nancy Carter, both five-year teachers at Milford's John F. Kennedy Elementary School—built with a flat, leaky roof on the edge of a swamp—described their transition from healthy athletes to physical wrecks, at the same time a handful of students and graduates were contracting rare illnesses such as scleroderma and Crohn's disease.

Anderson, who is allergic to mold, recounted how her symptoms, from vertigo to joint and muscle aches, got "tragically worse" after a "mystery smell" invaded the JFK school in November. Her white blood cell count dipped and her immune system weakened, before allergy shots and medications helped rebuild her immunity.

Carter wasn't so lucky. "Happy and healthy" when she started teaching at JFK, she experienced chronic sinus headaches and severe bronchitis within two years. In her third year, she was diagnosed with scleroderma, a chronic autoimmune disease.

"My skin began to harden and pull all over my body," Carter told wincing lawmakers. "My esophagus was beginning to dysfunction. I saw my life being stripped away from me before my eyes."

Carter, who today is being treated by an expert in autoimmune diseases, assured the panel she is now "on the road to recovery." But the mold in her building—to which she is allergic—is still there. "Both my allergist and rheumatologist believe that my school was a factor in my body succumbing to this disease," Carter said.

Veteran Fairfield teacher Joellen Lawson, who is on disability retirement because of severe mold exposure at the now-closed McKinley School (see *NEA Today*, November 2001), told the committee that she wished she and her doctors had linked her illness to the mold in her work environment when she first became seriously ill in 1998.

"If I had made that link," Lawson testified, "I would never have re-entered that building and re-exposed myself to the high levels of mold that were later identified."

Calls For a Bill With Teeth

This testimony helped humanize the Connecticut Education Association's case for meaningful, enforceable indoor air quality legislation.

A comprehensive bill, drafted by CEA last year with the help of environmental and occupational health experts, died without a vote on the last day of the last legislative session. In February 2002, a new, weaker bill—drafted without CEA input—surfaced in the Education Committee.

It'll take lots of lobbying and public pressure to toughen the current bill, but CEA and its allies—including parents, the environmental community, and other unions—are up for the challenge. Association members expect to return to Hartford for more testimony, and they'll be backed by an aggressive CEA media campaign urging legislators to "make all schools healthy."

By the end of the legislative session in May, no taxpayer in Connecticut—where the elementary student asthma

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FACTS AND FIGURES

A Problem Too Big To Ignore

Twenty percent of the U.S. population, nearly 55 million people, spend their days in elementary and secondary schools. Studies show that one-half of our nation's 115,000 schools have problems linked to indoor air quality.

Students are at greater risk because of the hours spent in school facilities and because children are especially susceptible to pollutants.

(Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program—www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/)

rate runs as high as 14 percent in some districts—will doubt that CEA has made cleaner indoor air in schools a top priority.

One TV spot, sponsored by CEA and the state PTA, shows a sunflower shrinking under an onslaught of smoke and dust. The message: *"Urge your state lawmakers to support indoor air quality legislation."*

And not just any IAQ legislation. The Constitution State needs a "regulatory system that focuses on prevention," CEA President Rosemary Coyle told the Education Committee.

"This focus," she said, "extends from when we first consider building a new building or renovating an older one, to how we maintain our existing buildings. Regulation, appropriate training, planning, and monitoring should be the hallmarks of any environmental quality bill for public schools."

"We do not want our children to fear coming to a building that will make them sick. We want them to learn, grow, and become adults to be proud of, not adults who will take an illness with them for the rest of their lives."

—Ellen Ginter, counselor
Amity Regional Senior High School

Among CEA's specific goals:

- An environmental site assessment before the construction of any new school.
- Bonding money for any needed environmental renovations.
- A required maintenance plan for each school's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system—plus required training for maintenance personnel, a written record of HVAC maintenance, and guidelines for performing maintenance work while a school is occupied.
- A uniform inspection and monitoring program for schools—plus systematic review of air quality-related health and maintenance data by health authorities.
- School logs of health complaints—from adults and students—that might indicate a trend or be related to potential indoor health quality issues.
- State-offered training on school environmental health issues—plus state support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's successful Tools for Schools program.

Top Priority: Health of Kids, Teachers

Opponents of comprehensive air quality legislation will, predictably, complain about mandates and money.

But Robert Murphy, CEA's director of professional practice and government relations, stresses that "we need to get a bill that establishes the beginning of a strong regulatory framework around these issues.

"Almost every state has a budget deficit excuse du jour to not do anything about sick schools," Murphy acknowledges. "Our response is that time is not a renewable resource—there's no more important priority than the health of children and educators who teach them."

Counselor Ellen Ginter, who was on seven allergy and asthma medications per day by late last year—before staff, students, and parents forced HVAC system improvements at Amity Regional Senior High—left this thought with the Education Committee: "I ask you to remember that school is a place where we want our children to feel safe and supported. It is also a place of work for so many.

"Please think of all these individuals," Ginter concluded. "We do not want our children to fear coming to a building that will make them sick. We want them to learn, grow, and become adults to be proud of, not adults who will take an illness with them for the rest of their lives." ✔

For a review of current state policies for improving school indoor air quality, go to the Environmental Law Institute Web site at www.eli.org. And for more on asthma and schools, go to http://asthmaandschools.org/.

YOUR DUES DID IT

NEAFT September 11 Fund

Last autumn, NEA and the American Federation of Teachers created the NEAFT September 11 Fund to assist children and other affected family members of the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath.

As of February 11, the fund had raised approximately $715,000 from NEA and AFT appropriations, state and local affiliates, and individual members—and paid out some $323,000 in financial aid.

Check recipients are keenly aware that this money didn't come from a cold bureaucracy, but from caring fellow union members.

AFT member Alice A. Henry, a secretary at New York's John Dewey High School, wrote NEA President Bob Chase: "My son, firefighter Joseph P. Henry, died in the World Trade Center and I know he would be so proud to know that NEA and AFT formed [this fund]. Your kindness will never be forgotten."

Nancy Brennan, a Patchogue-Medford (New York) teacher who will use her NEAFT check to start a trust fund for her deceased brother's two children, wrote, "It's wonderful to be a part of such a caring organization."

And elementary teacher Steven O'Brien, who lost his twin brother, Scott, in the World Trade Center blast, wrote in a moving thank-you letter to Chase: "I relive the events of September 11 over and over again: teaching my fourth grade class as I first heard about the attack, excusing myself to catch a glimpse of a TV, being horrified but having to go back and teach—after being directed not to share the news with my children.

"I'm [now] back at my school and it is the support of my co-workers, and especially my fourth graders who keep me busy and engaged," O'Brien concluded. "Who ever thought I'd look to my students for sanity? Thank you."

Valerie Scott, a retired AFT member in New Mexico, used the fund money she received to travel to New York for her son-in-law's memorial service, while AFT members in New York City used the cash to help replace copiers in schools damaged by the World Trade Center blast.

Much more fund money will be distributed in the months ahead as ongoing needs are realized. In order to minimize red tape, the two unions are relying on local affiliates to help identify those needs.

Thus far, fund recipients—predominantly NEA and AFT members—have been able to use the money for basic needs such as grief counseling, financial planning, rent or mortgage assistance, health care, or higher education expenses.

Life slowly returns to normal for many of these NEA and AFT members, but the needs will continue to be there. You can help by sending a check to: NEAFT September 11 Fund, Dept. 0033, Washington, DC 20041-0033. ✔

Are uniforms a good way to improve student discipline and motivation?

***PAT MORSE-McNEELY** retired two years ago after 26 years as a secondary school language arts, social studies, health, and special education teacher and guidance counselor in San Antonio, Stockdale, and Dallas, Texas. She also writes poetry.*

yes

In the late 1950s, South Houston Middle School instituted a very detailed dress code, although not exactly uniforms.

The kids could not come to school in their usual personal style. Girls wore dark skirts and light blouses. Hose and high heels were banned, as were extreme hairstyles like the beehives that were then becoming the big thing. Make-up was out except for light lipstick. Earrings had to be small and inconspicuous.

Boys wore dark pants and white shirts tucked in neatly, with loafers or lace-up shoes. No sneakers. No jewelry. Nothing to distract or compete for attention at the school.

Discipline improved drastically—fewer fights. Kids were not worrying about how they looked. They were on task 90 percent of the time. By the end of that year, the student body as a whole had jumped two grades, from *C*s to *A*s, *D*s to *B*s.

Since that time, I have read a lot of research both in favor of and against uniforms, and it appears to me that the preponderance of evidence is in favor. Catholic and other parochial schools have long used uniforms with success.

Parents find that buying two or three uniforms is ultimately cheaper than buying clothes to follow the fads, and it stops arguments at home about what Johnny or Mary will wear to school on this day or that. Uniforms "level" the student body because one cannot tell the "haves" from the "have nots."

While kids say they hate uniforms, they can hardly wait to join some school group that wears one: ROTC, spirit club, band. They seek pins, necklaces, sashes, jackets—all uniforms—that state something about the person and identify them as "belonging to...."

Uniforms build school spirit because they foster this sense of belonging. They enhance school loyalty and pride since the students are recognized wherever they go in the uniform as belonging to that particular school. They represent their whole student body.

In fact, I don't think it would hurt anybody if teachers were also required to wear uniforms! That would cut down on teachers' expenses and make them clearly identifiable to the student body.

Individualism does not depend on your hairdo or your dress, but upon your spirit, your personality, and your self-discipline. We are in real trouble if we depend on our mode of dress to express our individuality.

The only real freedom is freedom of thought. Conformity lives in rules and laws and all the other demands of living in large groups. Without conformity, there would be chaos.

When we adopt uniforms, we send a clear message: School is for learning, not showing off. ✔

***DAVE OLAND** teaches social studies and is the peer coaching coordinator at Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas, where he has worked for ten years. He wrote this essay with Patty Kamper and Brian Dolezal, members of his teaching team.*

no

The American spirit is not about conformity. It is about allowing individuals the opportunity to think outside the box. The ingenuity of individual thought has made this country great, and public education has fostered this type of thinking.

As we work to change our schools, we must focus on real issues like building relationships with parents, students, and colleagues while improving the quality of instruction. Let's not resort to quick fixes and band-aids like uniforms. We want to encourage our students to develop better attitudes on life, society, their future, and themselves. Let's engage them in a dialogue about what clothing is appropriate for school, rather than regulating what they must wear. Are we afraid to do the real work of changing the culture of our schools?

As our students come to the metal detectors in the morning, let's not greet them with, "Good morning. Do you have your uniform? No? Well, go home then. No education for you today."

Last year, our principal asked a committee to research this issue. We found no hard evidence that uniforms had any significant impact on improving achievement, only scattered anecdotes. In all the educational conferences we have attended over the years, we have never seen one session touting the power of school transformation through uniforms.

We support our district's general clothing guidelines. But creating and maintaining a new uniform policy would reduce the time spent on instructional improvement and increase divisiveness, both among staff and between staff and students.

Do we choose to run our public schools in the manner of prisons, boot camps, and parochial schools? Should we in public education place such a premium on forced conformity? We should celebrate our students' individuality, which gives us the opportunity to open a significant port of entry into their lives and build deeper, more authentic relationships with them.

Since redesigning our school into "Small Learning Communities" four years ago, we have had fewer fights and discipline problems, higher scores, and a much higher graduation rate. We didn't need uniforms to accomplish this.

Some say it is more economical for families to buy uniforms. But kids who want nice clothes will want them regardless of a uniform policy, so parents may need to buy both uniforms and the clothes kids really want to wear.

Do we want to risk alienating kids who may already be on the edge? Are we okay with losing even one child who may quit school if uniforms are mandated?

No. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Are uniforms a good way to improve student discipline and motivation?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should schools allow the sale of junk food?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*
32% Yes **68% No**

INTERVIEW

Building Schools That Make Sense

One leader says teacher morale, student achievement is at stake.

Scott Suchman

Many people are pondering the perennial question: What makes a school facility sound? But few are making it their mission to encourage teachers and parents to demand a say in how those facilities should be built. Mary Filardo is one of them. Eight years ago, she started the 21st Century School Fund to raise money to rebuild her child's deteriorating Washington, D.C. school, Oyster Elementary. Now she's branched out, and with the help of Ford Foundation and others is aiming to change the way communities nationwide look at school construction and its impact on student achievement. A daughter of educators who has worked in construction management for 25 years, Filardo has written extensively about public school facility issues. She talked with NEA Today*'s Marilyn Milloy about some of her projects and ideas.*

Tell us about the 21st Century School Fund—how it started, what it does.
Our primary mission is to build up the public will to modernize schools and build new ones. We particularly want the people who work in these buildings—the teachers, support professionals, students, principals—to really be a part of the process of planning and designing so that the schools themselves end up being the schools they want in their neighborhoods.

A lot of times communities get in too late—they notice something is happening when the site is being cleared. That's why our big message to folks is, "You need to worry early."

For me, it started with realizing that the classrooms in my children's school were really noisy—it drove my oldest child crazy. I started talking to the teachers and found out it was driving them crazy, too. So as a community we said, "Wait. We should be able to solve this."

How does school construction impact student learning?
We see the impact in several ways. One is in the delivery of the curriculum. If you don't have laboratories for your science, you're not doing laboratory science. If you don't have practice rooms for music, you're not doing instrumental music. If you don't have an art room with a sink in it, you're not doing very messy art work.

We also think learning is impacted by what we call "time on task"—how much time you're spending with core activities. In the school my kids went to, there was a bathroom on one floor, and so the entire class had to line up and wait for everybody to use it and get a drink of water before going back to class. I calculated they spent about 40 minutes in lines—and that's not even counting lunch lines. In the new school there's now a bathroom next to every classroom, and there's a sink with a drinking fountain in it.

What else eats up teaching time?
Emergency school closings because of fire code violations or asbestos—or because it's too hot or the boiler breaks down—all that affects time for teaching. So does absenteeism because poor air quality is aggravating allergies and asthma.

Then there's what we call acuity. A number of studies have found that if there are poor acoustics in a classroom, kids don't learn to read as well. If the lighting is dim, they can't see the board. If they're sitting in a room that's 90 degrees, they'll fall asleep.

Unfortunately, there isn't the research that sort of puts all this together, but it's what we've come to understand over the years, and we think it's significant.

So what are you doing to inspire parents, educators, communities to push for these kinds of improvements?
The Ford Foundation has agreed to fund an initiative we're leading with several other groups in four target communities—New Jersey, Ohio, Illinois and Washington, D.C.

Our first focus is to make sure there are local policies in place that support the participation of schools and communities in school facility planning. These would be things like public hearings, sign-offs by the local school before a project is approved by the school board. In Chicago, for instance, the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group is working very closely with the teacher's union on this front.

The other piece is monitoring and oversight. We're very concerned about the fiscal responsibility of school districts when they have billions of dollars they're looking at spending and have been spending on school construction.

You mentioned involving teachers—how important are they to this process?
Critical. We're actually doing a national teacher survey to understand better the way teachers experience their work environments—how these environments affect decisions about where they teach, what they teach, how they teach. We really want to involve them because we know the workplace affects morale and retention.

For communities that are already gearing up for capital improvement projects, are you offering any guidance on how their schools should be designed?
For now we're encouraging people to visit other schools. One junior high school I visited years ago—it was in an affluent suburb—really opened my eyes. The thing that got me was the home economics room. It had a demonstration table where the mirror lowered down so the teacher could show students how to cook. The English classroom had a little stage in the front—like a mini-theater. The teachers had offices off their classrooms and windows that allowed you to look into the rooms, and they had phones in every room. I thought, "This is amazing!" It really opens you to the possibilities.

But where do you draw the line between what's a luxury and what is truly necessary to enhance learning?
It's difficult. You really have to look at it and weigh. Obviously, if you have to decide between a science laboratory and a demonstration mirror, you pick the science lab. You also have to pay attention to air quality. Carpet, for instance, is a big problem. Many heating and ventilating systems are problematic. And you don't want to send six-year-olds up three flights of stairs to use the bathroom.

There's a lot, but the big message is that people need to get involved.

Isn't it all pretty ambitious—getting parents and teachers fired up amid budget crises and battles over salaries?
The job of rebuilding these facilities is going to be huge, yes, but it is our generation's responsibility. My kids went to schools that were built in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1885, and those communities sacrificed to build those schools. I think we have an obligation to make sure we leave schools in better shape than we got them. ✔

Mary Filardo, executive director of the 21st Century School Fund, can be reached at 202/745-3745. Her E-mail is: mfilardo@21csf.org. The Web site: www.21csf.org.

BestBet

Ms. Filardo will be guest speaker at NEA's Conference on Quality Schools and Education Funding, May 8-10, 2002 in Denver, Colorado. For conference information contact Sollie Manalaysay at 202/822-7763 or smanalaysay@nea.org.

Learning

Virtual Observation

New software makes it easy for educators to study each others' work.

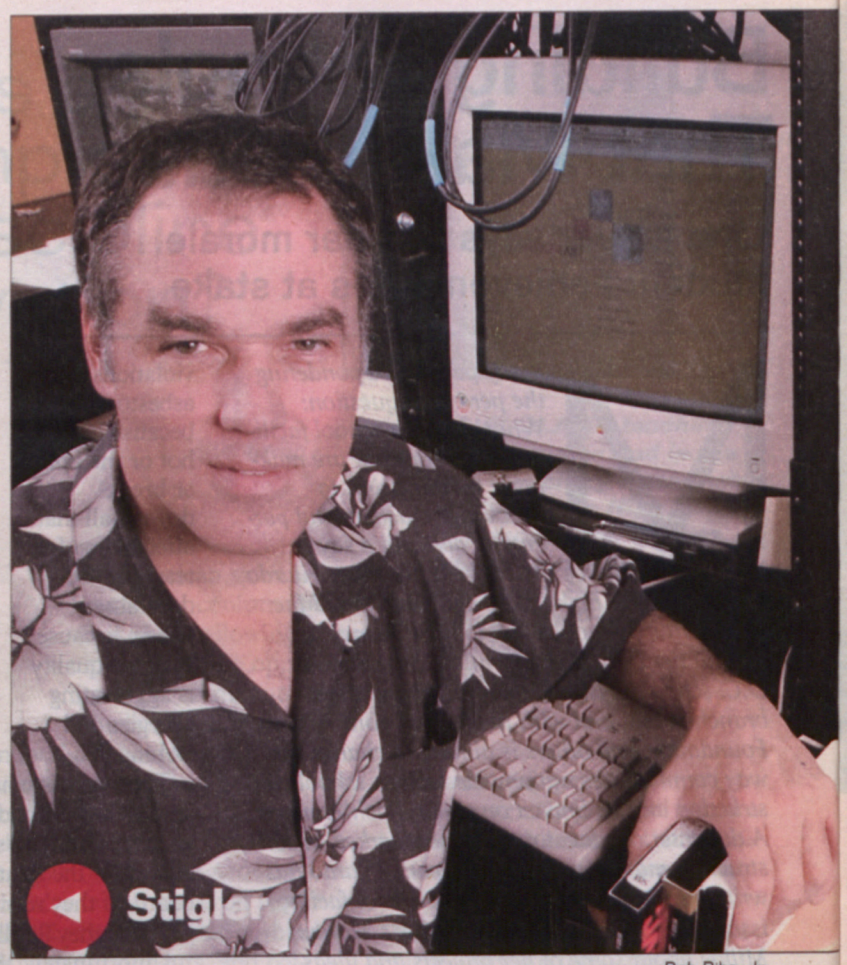
To become a better teacher, you need to watch a lot of classrooms so you can see and analyze how a wide range of other people teach, says UCLA psychology professor and education researcher **James Stigler**. But in American schools, he says, that kind of professional development experience is often impossible to arrange.

Stigler thinks he's got a technological fix for that problem. He started a company called LessonLab, which produces software that lets teachers see, analyze, and discuss each others' lessons with relative ease. The software, released last year, is now being tried by several thousand teachers nationwide.

Teachers have videotaped lessons for a long time, but the LessonLab software has taken this to a new level. Because the lessons are digitized and time coded, teachers can talk about specific incidents and watch them again without spending time getting to the right place on a tape. The software lets a teacher-observer watch someone else's lesson after school or at home, make notes on specific incidents, and share those notes with other people, either remotely or face-to-face.

Although teachers can use the software at home, Stigler doesn't think it will replace face-to-face talks. But it can make those conversations more efficient, he believes, because participants can refer to parts of the lesson and immediately show people what they mean.

Stigler is quick to say his software is not a professional development program, but rather a tool, much like a word processing application that makes writing easier but doesn't do the work for you.



Bob Riha, Jr.

Stigler insists there's no single right way to teach. The right approach for one student may be wrong for another. So LessonLab is not trying to compile a set of exemplary lessons. Rather, the company is building a library that shows real world teaching in all its complexity.

"Most educational research is not relevant to the classroom," Stigler says. "Education researchers study things like general characteristics of how children learn. What teachers need is studies of specific curriculum and standards—how to teach Billy Goats Gruff to third graders so they learn what you want them to learn."

For More: Visit www.lessonlab.com.

Sandy Schaeffer

Foreign-Born Students Find a Voice

One teacher and some dedicated foreign-born students are publishing a newspaper to give voice—in English—to kids warming to a new land and language.

Silver International, in its 15th year, is produced three times a year by immigrant students at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, where its founder, **Joe Bellino**, heads the English to Speakers of Other Languages Department.

The key motivation for the kids is that their work will be read by people outside the class. It's real communication, not an exercise.

Bellino recalls a Salvadoran student who wrote the story of his escape from El Salvador. Its publication "really opened him," says Bellino. "He seemed like a different person, more outgoing."

Silver International's 12-person staff boasts kids from Ghana, Bolivia, China, Haiti, and more.

The paper also draws writing from other international students at Montgomery Blair, plus children at elementary and middle schools. "Second-language learners don't have many opportunities to get published," says Bellino.

Begun as an after-school club, the paper is now published by a journalism class.

"The bigger picture is what it does for readers," Bellino says. Someone will read a story in our paper and come wanting to tell his or her story.

The school prints 3,900 copies. Five hundred go to outside subscribers, including children in other countries.

For More: Visit http://silverinternational.mbhs.edu/ or E-mail SilverInternational@mbhs.edu.

'Braille Is Beautiful'

Looking for ways to help your students understand the perspectives of those with disabilities? Braille Is Beautiful, a new program from the National Federation of the Blind, could be just the ticket.

Braille Is Beautiful is a flexible, hands-on program that comes complete with a Braille stylus and slate for kids to learn with. It aims to help sighted students in grades four through six understand not only Braille, but also the many capabilities and achievements of blind people.

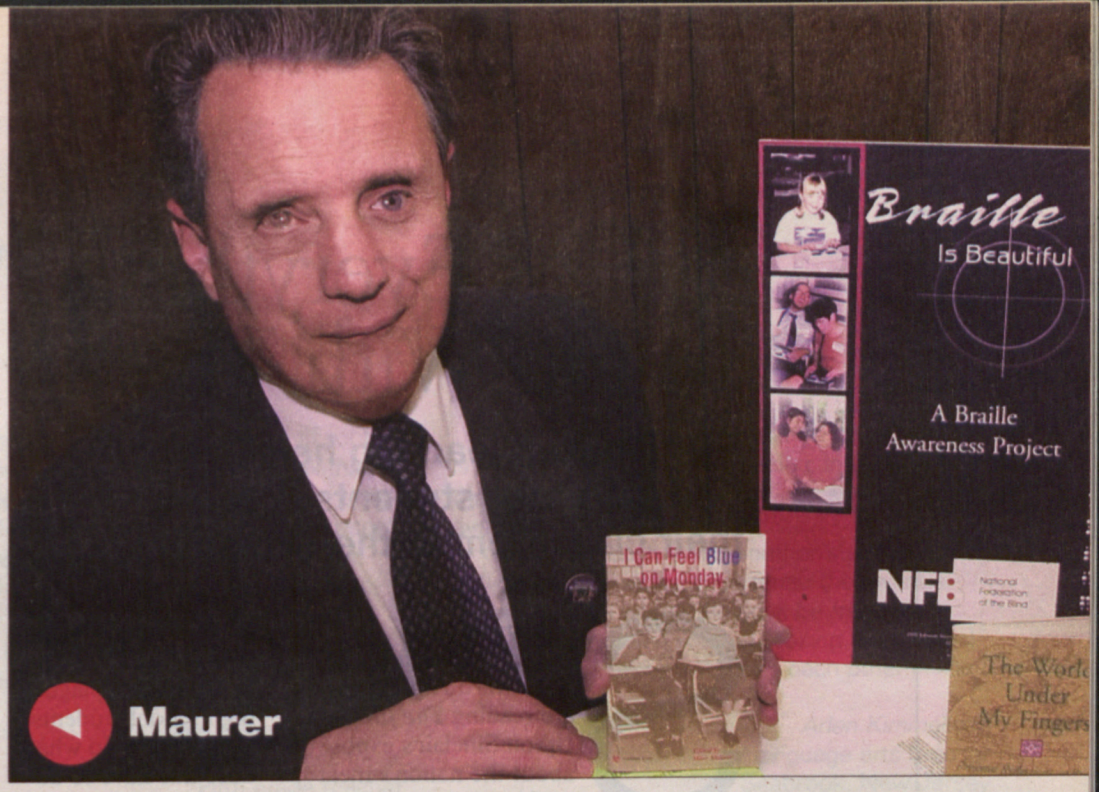
Marc Maurer, the federation's president and who is himself blind, created the program to make blindness "less weird" to kids.

"I've used few materials that generate as much excitement," says Claudia Bosworth, who last year introduced Braille Is Beautiful to her 32 fifth graders at Fort Smallwood Elementary in Pasadena, Maryland. "My students all wanted their own slate and stylus. Several of the kids contacted the National Federation of the Blind on their own."

Bosworth especially appreciated the program's classroom video, *Jake and the Secret Code*.

In the video, ten-year-old Jake becomes separated from his mother while visiting the National Federation of the Blind. He wanders into the office of Mr. Chong, who puzzles him by doing lots of things Jake didn't think blind people could do.

Mr. Chong gives Jake a crash course in the "secret code" of Braille. He also clues Jake in on how to help his mother become more comfortable around blind people.



Sandy Schaeffer

"Nothing is more fun than a secret code," says Bosworth.

She adds, "After using Braille Is Beautiful, I saw my students become more understanding of children in other areas as well, whether it was a disability or just a kid who wasn't as quick at a given subject."

Braille Is Beautiful includes five instructional units with a variety of learning formats including group discussions, interactive games, and applied projects. Parts of the program can be used together or alone.

"To me, blindness is not unusual," Maurer says. "It isn't that I forget it, but it's not a thing I think about much. But to many people, it's weird.

"Children can be cruel. If there is a noticeable difference in another child, it will be used against that kid—unless the difference has charm," says Maurer. "With Braille Is Beautiful, we're trying to take an isolating difference and make it into a charming difference."

For More: Visit www.nfb.org or call 410/659-9314.

Mark Matson

Covering Kids with Health Insurance

***Marisa de le Garza** travels the byways of her native Texas, spreading the good news of affordable health care for children. She works for* Covering Kids, *a group educating families about government health insurance programs.*

What is the need?
About 8 million children have no health insurance. Most of these kids are eligible for coverage, if their parents only knew how to apply. CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Plan, covers moderate income families.

How can schools help?
Educators have credibility. I know a teacher who had many parents who couldn't afford glasses for their kids. She talked to them, and now those kids can see the board.

Is there a link between health insurance and academic success?
Studies show kids with insurance are better learners. They get care and recover from illness faster because their parents aren't reluctant to take them to the doctor.

For More: Visit www.coveringkids.org or call 877/KIDS NOW (543-7669).

Hook Up with NEA Student Members

Need volunteers for a community outreach project at the library?

Want pro-teacher letters sent to the local newspaper?

Ask the education students in the NEA Student Program, which has launched an effort called "Hook Up" to connect its local chapters with other NEA affiliates.

Student Program Chair Christie Morrison says educators can "hook up" with NEA Student members who can help in their classrooms, with projects and on field trips.

"In a couple of years, you'll have active members, better prepared to be quality educators, stay in the profession, and be successful," says Morrison.

In return, she adds, Student members can benefit tremendously from contacts in the real world of education.

Morrison says Student members have read stories for NEA's Read Across America campaign in Texas, phone-banked during elections in Pennsylvania, helped rebuild a burned-out school in South Dakota, and joined in many other activities all across the country.

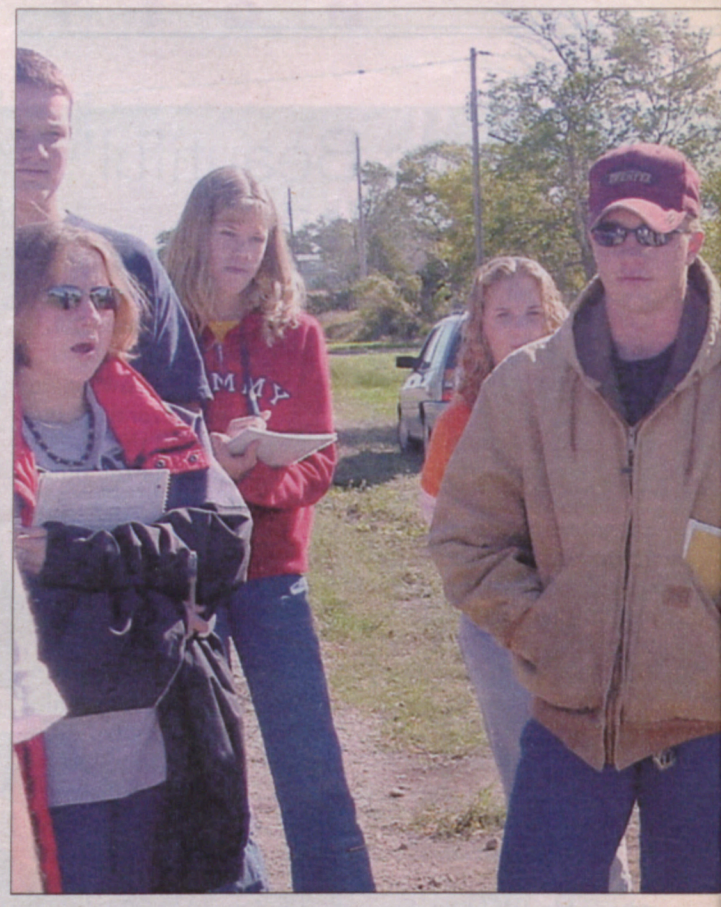
The NEA Student Program has affiliates at many schools of education and a membership of more than 50,000. Yet this represents only 5 percent of education students nationwide.

NEA student organizers note that it makes good sense to help the Student chapters become stronger. More than four-fifths of these members join their NEA affiliate in their first year of teaching, and a third go on to leadership positions in NEA.

For More: Contact Christie Morrison at cmorrison@nea.org.

'It Has Everything To Do With Them'

Place-based learning helps South Dakota students connect their classroom to their community.



Students in Mary Stangohr's English class at Howard High School are reading *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair's exposé about the nation's meatpacking industry. Like any good English teacher, Stangohr reviews the traditional topics: content, theme, tone, symbolism. But the lesson doesn't end here. Stangohr stimulates a class discussion about the hamburger students eat for lunch and the discussion expands based on their interests.

Ken Klotzbach

Mary Stangohr talks with students in her English class.

Inevitably, the discussion leads to the question that plagues high school students everywhere: So what does this have to do with me? The answer is especially significant for Stangohr's students, most of whom come from farming families in this rural South Dakota county. Students ask questions about cattle prices and livestock feed and the reasons their families work multiple jobs to make a living wage.

"They find out very quickly it has everything to do with them," Stangohr says.

Incorporating the local community into a lesson isn't just a choice. It's a well-planned teaching strategy known as place-based learning. The approach involves students in real work that identifies and solves real community problems. Through place-based learning, students develop a sense of civic duty and an appreciation for where they live. At the same time, their work meets a local need and strengthens the connection between the school and community.

"Rural schools in rural communities function together," Stangohr says. "Without the school, the community dies. It's pretty much the heartbeat and lifeblood of the small, small communities like Howard."

The magnitude of the projects varies. Stangohr's students write biographies about local women, while science students provide water testing to a local fish farm. Meanwhile, business students initiated a campaign to increase local spending. The students' efforts yielded $15 million in new revenue.

"Students have a valuable place in the community, and I think that's what's really stressed in place-based learning," says 18-year-old Kay Schwader, a senior in Stangohr's class. "It doesn't just help the community. It helps students realize they are an important part of the community."

The flight of young people is one of the great challenges rural areas face, says Elaine Roberts, president of the South Dakota Education Association. Place-based education is one way rural educators hope to keep their best and brightest students close to home.

"You educate your kids to go someplace else to live the good life," Roberts says. "Place-based education helps

Idea Exchange

Student Helpers

I was amazed to learn my students wanted to help me with more jobs in the classroom, so I created a list of 30 jobs for my students. Some jobs are as simple as plugging in lamps, answering the door, feeding the fish, and finding my clipboard when I need it. Some are more complicated like recording the sunrise and sunset or the high and low temperatures and starting or shutting down the computers. Because they keep the job for a semester they create the habit of remembering the job without any reminders and they are saving me loads of time and energy!

Marilyn Van Bael
Chesterfield, Michigan

Overhead Sentences

I use the overhead to have students arrange words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs. I type the words on the computer using a large font, print them on a transparency, and then cut up the sentences. When students are able to move the words around on the overhead and the class can see what's going on, they pay attention. Sentence strips can be used in the same manner.

To modify for younger students, you could use letters to make words or show a picture and have the students give the correct word.

Maggie Harder
Lillington, North Carolina

Weekly Behavior Report

To keep parents informed of their child's progress and behavior, I send a Weekly Behavior Report home each Monday.

The report has a box for each day in which I document both positive and negative behaviors and any grades the student has earned that week.

I also note any special assignments.

The parents must sign the report and send it back to school.

The weekly report not only informs the parents, it's also good documentation for me.

Maryellen Eaves
Louisville, Mississippi

Works 4 Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tip to *NEA Today*'s 2.6 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

Mary Stangohr

Community member Tom Kilian gives students a tour of the abandoned town of Vilas, South Dakota.

young people see how they can live the good life in this rural community. The implementation and sustained effort in a program like this could help stop the out migration."

The approach also shows community members they must play a role in the lives of their young people if the community is going to survive, Roberts says.

The Rural School and Community Trust, a nonprofit education agency, works with about 700 schools in 35 states on place-based learning programs. By building up the schools, the program builds up the communities, says Dorothy Williams, director of capacity building for the Trust.

"In rural communities, many times the school is the only public facility and it holds the greatest resources," Williams says. "So we have to help the schools grow and get better and connect that growth and development to the growth of the community."

At the same time, though, place-based learning does not overlook mandated content standards, Williams says.

SDEA's Roberts admits that new federal testing mandates will strain some place-based programs, because the strategy takes a broader approach to instruction. But Stangohr at Howard High School believes the two strategies can co-exist.

"Am I concerned about content standards? Yes I am, but you can do place-based learning and still achieve your standards," Stangohr says. "We're very mindful of the testing, but we're not going to quit doing this. This is good teaching." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

For more: Visit the Rural School and Community Trust at www.ruraledu.org.

[DILEMMA]

How do you stop kids from teasing?

For this activity you need a tube of toothpaste and construction paper. Tell the students that the toothpaste represents hurtful words and the construction paper is the person to whom the words are directed. Ask a volunteer to squeeze the toothpaste on the construction paper. Then ask the volunteer to put the toothpaste back in the tube just as easily. They can't! The lesson is that words easily come out of our mouths, but once they come out, you cannot take them back.

Roxanne Hendricks
Fifth grade teacher
Orlando, Florida

■ I make sure everyone knows the consequences for teasing, and what to do if they are being teased. Several times during the year I ask test essay questions such as, "What should you do when someone teases you and hurts your feelings?" These questions allow me to evaluate each student's understanding about the rule, while also allowing me to reinforce it.

Pamela Galus
High school earth science teacher
Omaha, Nebraska

■ We had a large forum about bullying and also broke into teams. One team watched stories about bullying followed by discussion. Another group talked about threatening scenarios and developed positive strategies to deal with those experiences. Each child gave a summary about what he or she learned.

Carl Frels
Elementary math teacher
Scranton, Pennsylvania

■ From day one I tell my students that my room is a "safe room," where people can express their ideas freely without fear of teasing or negative criticism.

They may laugh WITH another student but not AT another student. Because they want a place in school where they can be free to express themselves without teasing, they actually police themselves and keep each other in line and tease-free!

Arlen Kimmelman
High school language arts teacher
Seabrook, New Jersey

■ I teach eighth grade language arts and maintain a "zero-tolerance policy" regarding ridicule, teasing, mockery, and expressed racism. When I catch students teasing someone I ask them to stand and repeat what they said "for the whole class to enjoy." If students say they don't remember what they said, I ask them to remain standing until they do remember or to apologize to the person they teased. The method degrades no one, and functions as an effective deterrent to future offenses.

Bret H. Hart
Eighth grade language arts teacher
Eden, North Carolina

Got an Answer?

How do you get students to ask good questions?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

■ In my classroom guidance sessions I teach students that teasing is caused by low self-esteem. Teasers do not like themselves and try to make themselves feel better by making others feel bad. This approach makes the students teased feel better because they learn that teasing is not about them. I also work with the teasers to emphasize that others know why they tease and to help them to see their own attributes.

Florence Woods
School counselor
Nashville, Tennessee

Ted Pitts

"Real primary teachers... don't buy dry clean only clothes."

—Diane Postman, kindergarten teacher, Poquoson, Virginia

Why Do We Have Seasons?

Taking advantage of curiosity and misconceptions.

Students do say the darndest things and middle-school science teachers like Tawny Alvarado in Lansing, Michigan and Diane Mason in Hudson, Massachusetts have heard it all.

Pre-assessment is critical to uncovering misconceptions, says Alvarado, who uses these mixed-up notions to guide her teaching and get her sixth graders at Otto Middle School back on track. Several years ago, she and other educators in Lansing watched *A Private Universe*, a video produced by the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, which shows new Harvard graduates, professors, and a group of ninth graders all offering their own, almost always erroneous, explanations for questions as basic as, "Why is summer hotter than winter?" Intended as a professional development tool, the video says educators need to free students from their private theories before new knowledge can take hold.

Sean Dough

Daymon Hartley

Diane Mason (above) demonstrates why we have day and night. Tawny Alvarado (below) helps a student listen to his heart.

Alvarado agrees and starts new units with "mind-stretchers" in which students write down everything they know about a question she poses. "I get a lot of blank looks at first," she says.

Discussion brings forth answers—and misunderstandings—and then Alvarado sees the direction the lesson needs to take. "You won't know what they're thinking if you don't probe," she says.

When she discovered many students thought the blood coursing through their veins was blue, Alvarado asked those who'd had blood drawn to describe its color as it flowed into the test tube. Laden with carbon dioxide, that dark red substance is certainly a different shade than the familiar bright red, oxygen-rich blood oozing from a cut. But, the class realized, it's not blue.

The strange, half-true, or humorous scientific thinking that students bring to middle school has remained fairly predictable during her time in the classroom, Alvarado says. "But the way teachers address these misconceptions has changed."

Hundreds of miles to the east at John F. Kennedy Middle School, Mason, an educator for 18 years, says she's still amazed whenever she watches the *Private Universe* video. "It made me aware that all kids, even the brightest, have these ideas embedded in their minds, and trying to change them is difficult." But she's hopeful that her approach will give students a better chance of answering such science questions correctly if videotaped at their college graduations.

'Gee, I wrote that?'

Like Alvarado, Mason uses writing for pre-assessment. "It helps kids sort out their thoughts and gives them a

Geoff Smith

Test Your Knowledge

It's not just kids—most grown-ups don't know some basic things about nature because ideas they picked up as kids got in the way of what they were taught later.

1. Why is summer hotter than winter?

(a) The sun gives off more heat in the summer.

(b) The earth is closer to the sun.

(c) The sun is higher in the sky and days are longer.

2. Why does the moon have phases?

(a) As the moon orbits the earth, we see different amounts of the Moon's sunlit side.

(b) The moon passes in and out of the earth's shadow.

(c) The moon passes in and out of the sun's shadow.

3. Can a cat see in a totally dark room?

Yes.

No.

4. When an acorn grows into a giant oak, where does the wood come from?

(a) Mostly from the soil.

(b) Mostly from water.

(c) Mostly from air.

For More:
On summer vs. winter and phases of the moon, see www.learner.org/teacherslab/pup/. The wood and seeing-in-the-dark questions are discussed in Private Universe teacher workshops two and five. See www.learner.org/channel/workshops/privuniv/.

Answers: 1: c. 2: a. 3: No. 4: c.

record of what they were thinking—something they can return to and say, 'Gee, I wrote that?'" Then they either revise their initial statements or take pride in how right they were from the start.

Each year her students study the moon in depth, keeping a month-long journal filled with their observations, questions, drawings and discoveries. "The moon's phases are very hard for both children and adults to understand," says Mason. It's not uncommon, she explains, to find a student believing that somehow the moon gets recreated each month. "Students need to comprehend that there's a round moon out there all the time and when you just see a piece of it, the rest isn't gone."

Hands-on activities fill both teachers' classrooms, helping students visualize the correct scientific concepts.

Minute by minute changes

Ongoing assessment through discussion, reflective writing, projects, and testing are essential, says Alvarado, who's taught for 16 years. She and her colleagues receive extensive training through their school's partnership with Michigan State University. Although sticking to her objectives, she's learned to change her direction, sometimes minute by minute.

Matthew Schneps, the astrophysicist who co-produced *A Private Universe,* says he's still surprised at its wide circulation. Originally intended for a target audience of 3,000 high school astronomy teachers, the video has racked up a half-million sales with untold copies floating around.

Its popularity may have spawned "lots of misconceptions about misconceptions," he says. "People think you have to stamp them out or otherwise a student's thinking is poisoned." Instead, he says, "work with them."

That advice holds true across a variety of disciplines.

"Kids come up with amazing explanations—it's a sign of human intelligence," says Schneps. A child who is curious will naturally develop misconceptions. "It's what happens when you put a logical thinker in touch with limited information."

Teachers should view it as a signal that a child is ready to get more information, he says. Then, they can bridge the gap from where a child is to the correct information.

"Children's lives are filled with fanciful activities," he says. When he's reading a picture book with his children and comes across a child perched on top of a crescent moon, he wonders, "Should I give a scientific explanation for why that's not possible or should we just read and enjoy the story?

"We just enjoy it," he laughs. ✔

For more: Check out http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/cfa/sed/resources/privateuniv.html and follow links to the Annenberg/CPB Channel, which broadcasts the Private Universe Project workshops.

[DILEMMA]

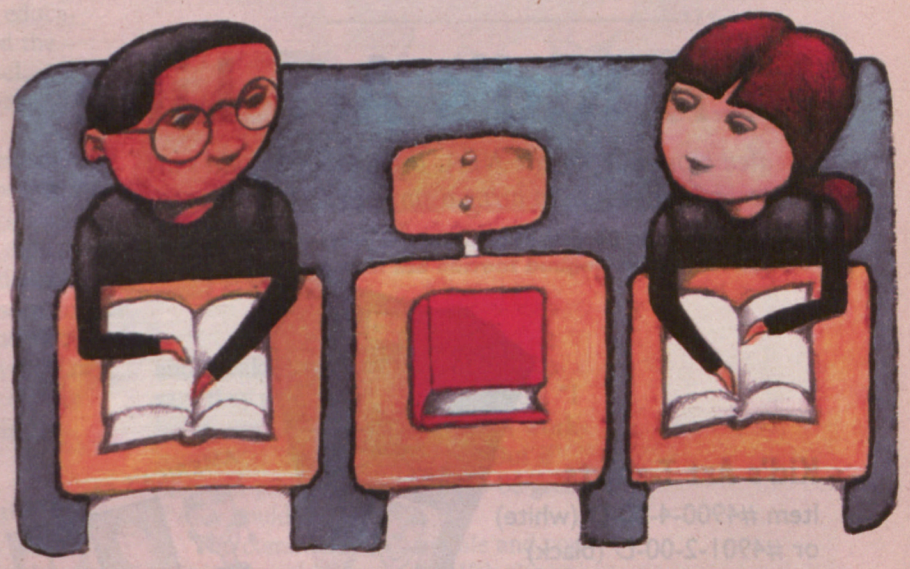
How do you deal with chronic absentees?

Our school uses a monthly attendance reward system. The names of perfect attendance students are put in a drawing for each grade. The prize is a ball of the student's choice.

We give a trophy to the class with the best attendance of the month. Also, classes with ten days of perfect attendance get an ice pop party. Fifty days gets them pizza and a movie, and 75 days gets them a free trip. No student wants to be responsible for the class losing out. It sounds expensive, but so are lost days when we don't receive funding.

For chronically absent students, parents are held liable and we go the legal route.

Jacqueline Pavesi
Fourth grade teacher
Los Angeles, California



■ I have a phone in my room and routines that the students do first thing, while I take attendance and make calls. Often, the absent student answers! The best part is, the other students hear the reminder about the importance of coming to school. It works great!

Michelle Beerbower
Alternative education teacher
Holt, Michigan

■ Often, the attendance clerk comes to me for information on a student who is absent a lot. As a school nurse, I may have referred the student to medical care or talked with the parent about a medical-behavior concern.

I also check the daily absent list and give the clerk information that might be helpful, keeping in mind confidentiality. When the absence goes longer than is reasonable, I phone the parent and ask if I can help. This is less intrusive than a call from the clerk. Sometimes it works, and sometimes not!

I also contact the health care provider, who often has no idea the student is still using a medical excuse. Many chronically absent students have been recovered this way.

Mary Kathryn Myers
School nurse
Kent, Washington

■ Many students develop a fear of school, sometimes from homesickness or being picked on. Educators need to get the parents involved. They can help figure out the problem and help the child feel more comfortable about school.

Educators also need to get that child involved in fun activities at school. This can develop friendships and give the child more self-esteem. Put the student in charge of the class pet, or help the student join the basketball team. If it is an academic problem, have a peer tutor the student, help the parents so that they can aid their child in academics, or even arrange to help the student yourself.

Jocelyn Hardy
Education student
Clarion, Pennsylvania

■ A student isn't chronically absent just because he or she feels like it. The myth of kids playing hooky and going down to the fishing hole is just that—a myth. There are much more serious problems when a student is out.

I had a boy who had two pairs of pants. One had a small hole in the thigh no bigger than a pea, but to him it was huge. When he had to wear those pants, he wouldn't come to school. We bought him a few pairs of pants. He was never out again except for sickness, and became a model student.

We have building-based "swat" teams: a psychologist, a social worker, a health care professional, an attendance officer, a teacher, and an administrator. When a trigger goes off (such as absenteeism), the team gets on the case immediately.

Services used to be housed all over the district and it took a long time to communicate. Meanwhile, the student was missing school and in a revolving door that included the courts. We are the most densely populated city in the country and have a very transient population. But with this approach, we are running around 95 percent attendance.

Richie Malizia
Attendance officer
Union City, New Jersey

Got an Answer?

How do you handle a student who threatens you?

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Item #4914-4-00-D (gray) or
#4915-2-00-D (black)
Sizes M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL
$30.00

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#4995-0-00 (blue)
$6.95

NEA Neck Totes
Item #4938-1-00-D
$1.95

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The Future of IDEA

There's a lot at stake as the federal government gets ready to revise and renew the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Since it was first passed in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is estimated to have helped six million disabled children get a better education. But frontline educators know that some aspects of the law need to be improved. IDEA is up for revision and renewal during the next year. A presidential commission is already meeting and trial balloons are flying. The time to have an impact is now.

The federal government promised to pay 40 percent of special education costs, but in the current budget, the actual dollars amount to 17 percent.

What are some of the changes NEA is working for?

Patti Ralabate, an NEA staffer and a former speech and language pathologist from Connecticut, has talked with members around the country to shape the organization's lobbying priorities. She says four key proposals come up over and over:

- Reduce paperwork.
- Make more and better professional development available for regular education teachers who are asked to adapt their work for students with disabilities—sometimes very severe disabilities.
- Make safety and discipline rules more consistent, so that all students—disabled and non-disabled—are held responsible for their actions and face appropriate consequences. On this last point, says Ralabate, NEA will work to ensure that if a disabled student is removed from school for a serious discipline infraction, that student will still receive appropriate education services. Otherwise, she says, "the problem isn't solved, it's just temporarily moved into the street. All kids—disabled or not—should have alternative ways to receive an education. Maintaining a stable society demands this."

NEA's position is supported by the Fraternal Order of Police, the largest national law enforcement organization.

- Reduce class size and caseloads so every child can be treated as an individual—and that means upping the federal contribution from the current 17 percent to the 40 percent that was promised back in 1975.

What about the controversy over the large numbers of African-American boys in special education?

Many more boys are in special education than girls, regardless of ethnic group, but the proportion of African-American boys is especially high. Government figures show that about 3.1 percent of African-American boys have been placed in the mental retardation category compared with 1.3 percent of white boys. About 2.2 percent of African-American boys are in the emotional disturbance category, compared with 1.4 percent of white boys.

Ralabate notes that several explanations have been proposed—the effects of poverty, a bias among some educators and in diagnostic tests, and the extra savvy that white, middle-class parents often bring to Individual Education Plan meetings.

Ralabate says that in hundreds of IEP meetings she's attended, low-income parents often were eager for their children to get extra help, but they didn't know much about IDEA. "Middle-class parents, typically, have already seen an advocate before they come to the meeting," says Ralabate. "They know the law, and they say, 'We want services for our child, but you're not going to call him mentally retarded.'"

What solutions are being proposed?

One idea is to stop trying to decide whether a student is "learning disabled" or "retarded," and simply give extra help to students with low academic achievement.

Ralabate thinks this might be a good idea, but not if it serves as an excuse to save money by depriving some children of the extra help they need.

What's the timeline for revising IDEA?

President Bush has appointed a Commission on Excellence in Special Education to look into possible changes in the law. The commission is holding hearings around the country, and NEA affiliates are taking part. The commission's report is expected by the end of June. The White House is likely to make its proposals for changing IDEA in the fall.

Meanwhile, NEA lobbyist Kim Anderson says Congress is gathering information and planning hearings. Members of Congress are contacting NEA to get the views of educators about what should be done.

The current law expires at the end of this year, but if there is no agreement by then, it could be extended temporarily.

What can educators do to help make sure IDEA becomes a better law next year?

NEA members should speak at hearings of the presidential commission and send letters, explaining what educators need from the federal government if we are to "leave no child behind.

Ralabate, who has been attending and speaking at the hearings herself, says they are very sparsely attended. "I know our members are in school working during the day," she says. "But if they can get the time, it would be great if they could go."

The commission's schedule and contact information are on its Web site at www.ed.gov/inits/commissionsboards/whspecialeducation/index.html.

NEA members should also send letters and E-mail to their Representatives and Senators. Names and E-mail addresses are on the NEA Web site: Go to www.nea.org/lac/ and click on "E-Mail Congress." Members of Congress will hold meetings with constituents during the upcoming spring recess, and educators should take part.

Anderson says the NEA's most effective lobbyists by far are NEA members.

She urges members to talk about their personal experiences—how the law is making a difference in children's lives, and also how it can be very difficult to carry out without adequate resources, training and support.

Members of Congress don't spend much time in classrooms, and educators' personal stories can help keep the legislators grounded in reality when the rhetoric starts flying. ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For more:

- **E-mail Ralabate, pralabate@nea.org, or Anderson, kianderson@nea.org.**
- **The National Research Council issued a thoughtful report on minorities in special and gifted education in January, available at http://books.nap.edu/books/0309074398/html/index.html. The recommendations (chapter 10) are especially useful.**
- ***Education Week*'s report on reauthorization of IDEA, at www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=19idea.h21, offers useful background information.**

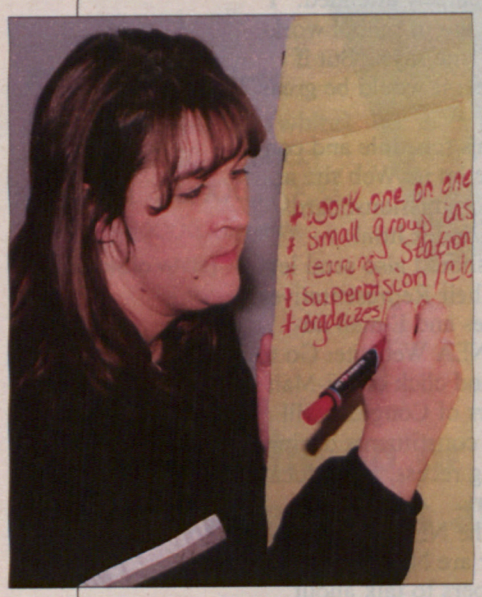
Learning

TEAMWORK

Finding Face Time

Paraprofessionals find strategies to communicate effectively with teachers.

As a reading aide at Medora Elementary School in Illinois, Mary Loy works with three different teachers in three different grades. "They each have totally different expectations from me," says the 20-year veteran. "And because it's hard to find the time to meet with each teacher individually, I'm not always sure about lessons and how I can best help each teacher with the students."



Teacher Christy Spencer-Mull lists ways teachers and paras can work together.

Michelle Lucker, a special education paraprofessional at Brighton West Elementary School, agrees: "As aides, we don't have planning time built into our day to meet with the teachers we work with. "Without that time, it's hard to know specifically what the teachers expect."

According to the Southwestern ESP Association, which represents the district's education support staff, Loy and Lucker's situation is common.

"We have a lot of aides in our district," says Association president Debbie Nash. "And regardless of whether they stay with one teacher or float to different classrooms, they all express a major concern: lack of time to communicate about how they can best help the teachers they work with."

That's why the Association recently capitalized on a provision in their contract that lets them develop their own in-service training.

In January the Association designed and delivered a one-day session called "The Power of Two: Strengthening Instructional Teams." More than 50 of the district's teachers and their assistants participated.

The training offered techniques for time and resource management and communication strategies the para-teacher pairs could use to establish more productive working relationships. Donna Manering, director of higher education for the Illinois Education Association, led the training.

"Our goal was to help the aides and the teachers communicate better with each other so they can maximize the resources they both bring to the classroom," says Manering.

Paraprofessionals and teachers examined their individual belief systems about schools, classroom strategies, and pedagogy and shared their beliefs directly with their work partners. They also developed action plans for improving and growing their relationships.

"It was an incredible workshop," says Lucker. "Because my teacher and I were given time to get to know one another's expectations for what the classroom should look like, we figured out how we can utilize each other more effectively."

Tammy Retherford, a first-year para at West Brighton, agrees: "I was able to share my objectives with the teacher I work with and she shared hers with me," she says. "Through the process, I discovered that a lot of her views were my views, too."

Photos by Chuck Weinshaupt

Paraprofessional Wanda Hartwick (left) and her teacher Donna Scheffel discuss strategies during the in-service training session.

Going the Extra Mile

It took two years, but sign language interpreters in Omaha, Nebraska, bargained their first contract with the public school system. The new one-year contract guarantees a new salary schedule, paid holidays, a duty-free lunch, overtime compensation, and planning time, among other benefits. The 19 interpreters (16 of whom have joined the Omaha and Nebraska State Education Associations) accepted the contract in December. Omaha Public Schools accepted it in January.

Under the new contract, the interpreters have a 10-step salary schedule that awards credit for experience. As a result, some interpreters will earn several thousand dollars more than they earned a year ago.

"When I came here three years ago, my starting salary was the same as interpreters who had been here 20 years," says **Rebecca Marks**, an interpreter for Omaha Public Schools. "I was benefiting but I knew it wasn't right."

The contract allows interpreters to use the school system's grievance and complaint procedure as well. Before they received a contract, the interpreters had no due process, their employment was defined by a fluid board policy and handbook, and they could be called upon at any time to interpret for extracurricular activities. Interpreters will receive a revised policy handbook and also are eligible for overtime pay and compensation for any hours they work outside of their normal schedule.

The contract also addressed a school system provision that required interpreters to wear blue smocks. The new contract no longer requires smocks. Instead, interpreters can wear any clothing that contrasts with their skin tone and provides a

TEAM PLAYER

Crunching the Numbers

Name: **Donna Johnson**
Job Title: Clerk IV, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts

What I do in my job: Bookkeeping, budget management, payroll, travel preparation, and other office duties.

The most rewarding part of my job: When I am able to help a student or faculty member resolve a problem and, of course, when all the numbers work out right.

Why I do what I do: I love a challenge and this job certainly provides for that. This job is diversified, no two days are the same and that makes it both interesting and fun. I love it and I'm good at it!

My greatest passion: It's being the best person I can be and helping others. Right now I am very involved in bringing the recognition of support professionals and their rights to the public, here in Massachusetts and within the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

My favorite pastime: Bowling and relaxing with friends.

How I've helped my Association: I began as a district steward, moving on to treasurer, grievance officer, and now president. Though I have served in many capacities, I believe I have been instrumental in assisting members to not only know their rights, but to become knowledgeable advocates for themselves and other members.

My community involvement includes: Vacation Bible School and Sunday school. I also was a day care provider in my community for six years before coming to the University. ✔

Tibora Girczyc-Blum

RESOURCES

Project PARA
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) offers free online training for paraprofessionals. Project PARA is a self-study program paras can complete on their own or with a local school district. The program includes units on classroom organization and management; instructional skills; behavior management; effective communication with students, teachers, and other professionals; and special education programs and procedure. If paras enroll with a local school, then results from the program are E-mailed to an instructor or mentor provided by the school. This instructor provides the participants with feedback and monitors their progress. Paraprofessionals also can use the resources on their own, although UNL cannot provide feedback or support. For more information go to http://para.unl.edu/default.html.

ESP Technology Grants
There's still time to apply for NEA's ESP technology grants! Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2002. These grants are awarded to educational support professional Associations (not to individual members) to help them use the ESP Information System and other online resources to carry out NEA's strategic focus. Awards range from $250 to $3,500. The application process is open to all local associations that have not received an ESP technology grant in the past three years. For more information, go to www.nea.org/esp/espnea/howtoapp.htm.

As a direct result of the in-service training, Retherford—who helped plan the session—now meets with her teacher before school to review plans and share ideas.

"Talking more often has become a priority for both of us," says the early childhood education program aide. "By communicating face to face, we're setting expectations and getting on the same page for the sake of our students."

Christy Spencer-Mull, a seventh grade special education teacher, says the session's practical skills helped improve communication with the paraprofessional she works with.

"I now feel like our relationship is enhanced to its fullest potential, which will directly benefit the students."

The training was the first time the local proposed and implemented a workshop that included teachers and addressed student learning, says Nash. But thanks to a $3,000 NEA Learning and Leadership grant, it won't be the last.

The Association hopes to offer two more workshops to reach 65 additional people, says Nash.

That's good news for Mary Loy. "I wish I could get this training every year," she says. "I'm already working better with the teachers and students because of the skills I learned. Everyone should have this experience." ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

good background for the interpreters' hands when signing.

As president of the Lake Forest Education Association in Delaware, Karen Crouse represents the interests of all members in her unified local. This financial secretary demonstrated her expert leadership last fall when several construction and renovation projects delayed the start of the school year. School district officials rescheduled the first day of school for September 10, but many of the construction projects still were incomplete and the schools were not equipped to handle students. Crouse worked with administrators and the school board to delay the start of school until September 13. Then she personally visited as many school staff members as she could to inform them about the new start date. Crouse points out that paraeducators helped teachers prepare their classrooms that week and custodians worked extra hard to prepare the schools for the students.

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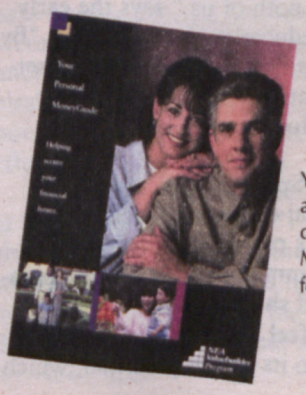

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VBNT0402

News You Can Use

You and your students will love this site! CNN Student News, at http://fyi.cnn.com/fyi/, offers students more than just news stories.

You'll find video clips, youth-specific topics, and homework help. At this site, you can also find the CNN Student Bureau, CNN's official student news-gathering and reporting program.

If you need a writing topic for an English class, look to this site first. You'll find lots of lesson plans and activities correlated to the daily news, plus weekly discussion guides, curriculum-specific learning units, and even professional development activities. Best of all, it's all free!

CNN Student News - Netscape 6
CNN Student News
News for students, resources for teachers
Harcourt
Riverdeep
Lay Invokes Fifth
Former Enron Corp. Chairman and CEO Kenneth Lay sat through 90 minutes of attacks from congressional investigators Tuesday before he declined to testify before a Senate panel probing the collapse of the former energy trader.
EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

CNN Student News offers video clips, homework help, and lesson plan ideas.

Betsy Norris
Middle School English Teacher
Shelbyville, Tennessee

Standards-Based Technology

During my six years of teaching I have been gathering useful Web sites. As part of my master's project, I put them all into one handy dandy Web site. I teach fifth grade in California and wanted to match the Web sites with the standards. The final product is a tool that helps fifth grade teachers implement technology into their standards-based curriculum. Here is the site: http://205.187.108.9/web/schuh/bookmarks/schuhbk.html.

Eric Schuh
Fifth grade teacher
Livermore, California

Online Gradebook

I have been using an excellent and inexpensive gradebook program called Gradepal.com. In addition to having my grades online, I can generate a weekly newsletter to E-mail or print and send home to parents. Because the main Web page is very attractive (and Gradepal allows me to select colors and fonts), I also print out my main page once or twice a month to send to parents who do not have Internet access and also to provide a paper record.

Each week, students submit brief articles that describe what we've been studying or projects that we are working on. With the "upload documents" feature, I can load virtually any document made at school or home onto the site, and I can access them from home or school. The customer support is fantastic and they are very willing to work with teachers to make this gradebook one of the best tools that I've ever used.

Margaret Byrne
Fifth grade teacher
Portland, Oregon

Wild Horse Winter

Retelling is a familiar way for students to demonstrate story comprehension. One effective and highly motivating retelling activity is to write a class poem together. My students enjoyed sharing a beautiful winter book, *Wild Horse Winter,* by Tetsuya Honda. Together they created an acrostic poem as I wrote their words on the chalkboard. We shared many ideas, and I worked with the students to revise their work. Later, the first-graders illustrated their project. You can read their poem and see their illustrations on the class Web page at www.mrsmcgowan.com/winter/acrostic.htm.

Marci McGowan
First grade teacher
Spring Lake, New Jersey

Shortcut to Success

I make folders to put on the students' computer desktops so they get right to a Web site without any surfing. I cut and paste the URL from the specific page I want them to view and place it in a Microsoft Word document. Then I save the file onto our school's network. Then I create a "read only" folder and place it on their desktops. (They also must have Word on their desktops.) All they have to do is open that folder and they can go to the exact place where the information is located.

Mary Seitz
Third grade teacher
Rockport, Indiana

My favorite Web site

My favorite Web site is www.bookadventure.org. This is a free online reading incentive program developed by the Sylvan Foundation. The site provides quizzes for a variety of books students can read. Students gain points by answering questions correctly and they receive prizes from sponsors. After completing each book, we have a discussion. Then students take the quiz on the Web site. They look forward to using the computer and receiving prizes from the program's sponsors.

Victoria King
Title I teacher
Warrensville Heights, Ohio

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Bytes for Beginners

I want to post student artwork on our school Web site, but I want to protect the students and their work. What are the correct procedures to get permission from the students and their parents and copyrights for the artwork?

You've noted two important issues in your question: student safety and intellectual property rights.

Student Safety

There are many opinions about how much information schools should share about students on a Web site.

Some schools have a policy that prohibits posting any information about students. Other schools leave the decision up to the practitioner and/or the school's Webmaster.

Assuming you've already checked to see if your school or district has an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) or other document that addresses these issues, I encourage you to review any traditional policies your school may have on student privacy and the use of student work.

The best school AUPs we've reviewed incorporate existing school policy found in a student code of conduct. This practice reduces any confusion about which policy takes precedence in a given situation, on- or offline.

That said, the most common approach is to avoid posting a student's last name, E-mail address, picture without a signed release from a parent or guardian, and any other pictures that identify a student by his or her first and last name.

Intellectual Property Rights

How to protect the intellectual property rights of student work on the Web also should be outlined in a school's/district's AUP and on the Web site.

Many commercial and higher education Web sites include a "Rights Management" page and link pages that contain copyrighted works, such as papers, art, or photography, to this page. A "Rights Management" page outlines use limits placed on the content and often includes a copyright statement and relevant contact information.

In general, you should get parent or guardian permission before posting any student work to the Web.

Getting Teens To Stop Smoking: A Different Kind of Challenge

Trying to quit smoking is tough enough, but convincing teens to stop can be bruising. We know it's worth the effort—giving up cigarettes can prevent long-term health problems and foil premature death—but kids rarely focus on those seemingly far-away concerns. To get a heads-up on the special needs of youth, Michele Hodak of the NEA Health Information Network talked to Dr. Corinne Husten, a medical officer in the Office on Smoking and Health at the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

What are the latest statistics on teen tobacco use?

According to the 1999 National Youth Tobacco Survey conducted jointly by the American Legacy Foundation and the CDC Foundation, cigarette use among middle school students was 9.2 percent, and more than a quarter of high school students were smokers. Although cigarette use among teens has dropped over the years, each day more than 5,000 kids try their first cigarette and more than 2,000 kids under age 18 become new daily smokers.

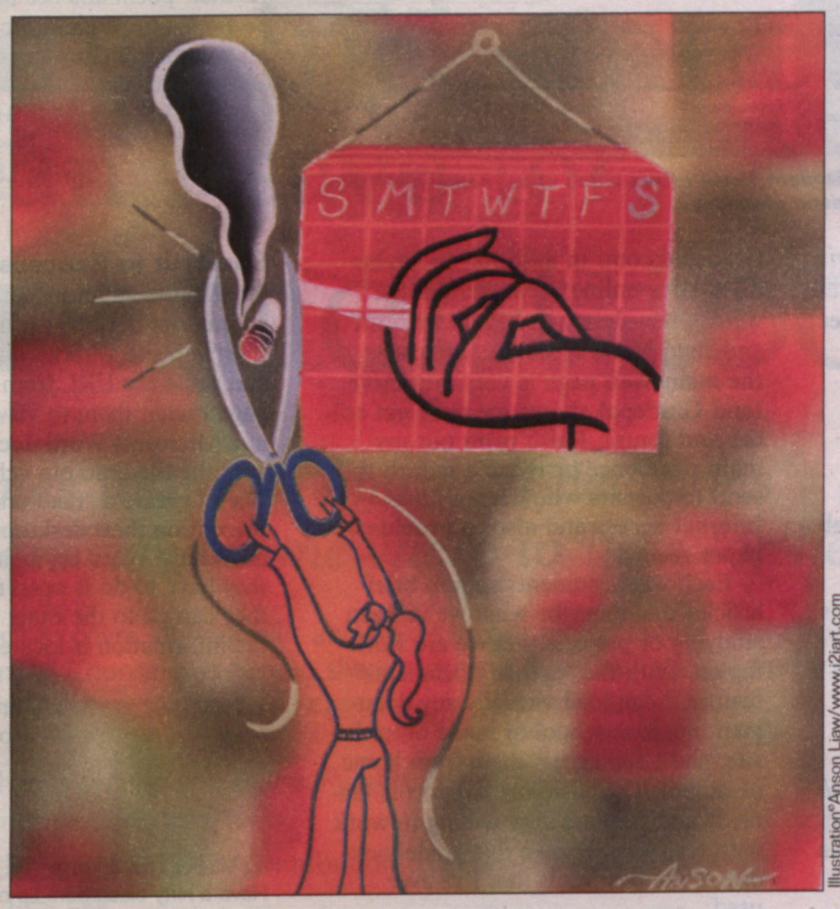
How quickly do teens become addicted to nicotine?

Nicotine is found naturally in tobacco and is as addictive as heroin, cocaine, or alcohol. But how quickly a teen gets hooked depends largely on how much he or she smokes or uses a tobacco product. The younger people are when they start to smoke cigarettes, the more likely they are to become strongly addicted to nicotine. A recent study conducted by Joseph R. DiFranza, et al., suggests that addiction can happen more quickly than previously thought—perhaps within weeks or even days after occasional smoking begins.

What are some special issues teens face when they think about giving up smoking?

Teens see themselves as invincible. Therefore, they tend to ignore the potential long-term health consequences of tobacco use and the connection to their current tobacco use. Young people think they will be able to quit whenever they want. And they don't think of trying to get help to do it, or think of it as even useful.

To make matters worse, teens are faced with an incredible amount of peer pressure to use tobacco products, and often that occurs in schools and other community settings. They are also strongly influenced by tobacco industry advertisements and parental use. These influences make it a challenge for young people who do want to quit smoking.



Illustration©Anson Liaw/www.i2iart.com

What tobacco cessation programs are available for teens and have they been proven effective?

A variety of programs are available, but few have been evaluated. Of those that have, the research is not conclusive enough to show they are effective. However, studies are currently being conducted, and in another year or two, more data will be available.

So what should a school be looking for if they want to implement a teen program?

They should select a program based on sound theory. Cognitive behavioral therapies appear promising here. And they should ask key questions about whatever research has been done on that program: How many kids were enrolled? How many completed the program? Of all the students who started, how many quit smoking and for how long?

Do teen programs differ from adult programs in any way?

Individual or group sessions usually focus on issues that are important and relevant to young people. For example, discussion may focus less on the long-term effects of tobacco use and more on the immediate effects and consequences.

Youth-oriented programs also have specific attainable goals and use contracts that include rewards. They also provide social support and teach avoidance, stress management, and refusal skills. Students need opportunities to practice skills and strategies that will help them remain nonusers. Finally, medication—mainly nicotine replacement therapy—seems to work for adults, but not necessarily for teens.

Are there different approaches to tobacco cessation for male and female teens?

Some programs separate gender, and others combine them. It hasn't been determined yet if one way is better than the other. ✔

Schools, teachers, and other education support professionals can play a crucial role in preventing teens from using tobacco and encouraging current tobacco users to quit. Specifically, they can:

- Establish and enforce school smoke-free policies.
- Provide access to tobacco prevention and cessation programs that help students stop using tobacco rather than punishing them for violating tobacco-use policies.
- Use school-based health clinics to offer students advice on quitting.
- Carefully evaluate any cessation programs based on a core set of evaluation measures.
- Provide comprehensive tobacco prevention education.

NEED SOME ADVICE? Here are some helpful resources:

- ***Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction*** **www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00026213.htm.**
- ***A Resource Guide to Youth Tobacco Cessation Programs,*** **American Cancer Society. Call 800/227-2345 to request a copy.**
- ***Core Evaluation Measures for Teen Cessation Programs*** **(Draft), CDC Office on Smoking and Health. For a copy call 770/488-5705.**

Dumping the Stress by Getting Fit

Is your New Year's pledge to eat better and get fit already history? Don't beat yourself up. It's not always easy following the advice of health professionals, even when you know benefits await. So what to do? Get inspired. Here's one busy member who's doing all the right stuff—and feeling great.

He's Greg Oborny, and he's convinced that staying fit and eating right have been critical to his success as an educator these last 15 years. "As a new teacher and graduate student in my 20s, I was very busy and my stress levels were really high," Greg says. "I realized that exercising regularly helped bring down that stress."

A former first grade teacher who is now an elementary school principal in Olathe, Kansas, Greg works hard at wellness. He plays in two competitive tennis leagues and visits the gym nightly for a combination of cardiovascular exercise and strength training workouts. He also takes weekly yoga, step aerobics, and kickboxing classes. A deep breathing routine helps him cope with the daily stresses of his job at Regency Place Elementary School.

"Interruptions are a big part of my day," Greg explains. "I often have back-to-back meetings, and when I don't work out regularly it affects the rest of my life and how I deal with people." It's all evidence, he says, that physical and emotional well-being go hand in hand.

"Establishing healthy habits can get you through the tough spots," he notes. "When I feel fit, everything else falls into place."

But Greg admits that eating healthy at an elementary school presents a challenge. "There are lots of birthdays and the kids put three or four cupcakes on my desk every day," he says. But he tries to compensate with healthier snacks. Meanwhile, he avoids "fad" diets and sticks to balanced meals that include fresh vegetables, wholesome grains, fish, and lean meats.

Photos by Tricia O'Connor

Greg Oborny, a Kansas educator, says playing tennis and lifting weights regularly have helped him get fit, beat stress and feel great.

And he doesn't crawl in a hole when he isn't perfect. "Working out daily and always eating well is not realistic for most of us," Greg says, "but if you set realistic goals and start slowly, then you will see your investment pay off." He suggests writing down fitness goals and posting them. It's a great motivater, but "you do have to stick with it."

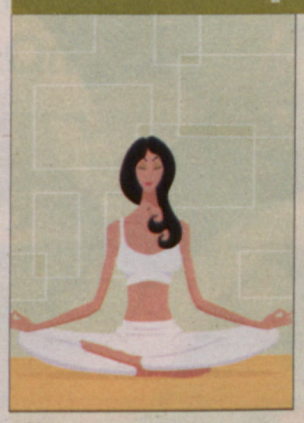
Partnering with someone can give you a boost, too, Greg says. At his school teachers work in pairs or with their families as they introduce healthy menus and nightly walks into their routines. His school district also offers a staff fitness program called, "Choose Wellness," that includes yoga, step aerobics classes, and cholesterol screenings. Staffers win prizes for participating in fitness activities, and many have been inspired to make life changes.

To find out more about how to add exercise and a healthier diet into your life, visit the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports website at www.fitness. gov/ and the American Dietetic Association at http://www.eatright. org/. ✔

—Kandra Strauss
NEA Health Information Network

Quick Tip

Sameta Rush



Low on energy? Totally stressed out? Yoga may be just what you need!

With roots in Eastern philosophy, yoga really is a wonder, offering therapeutic and preventive health benefits for the mind, body and spirit.

Its joys are endless: It increases joint mobility and muscle flexibility, eases back pain, increases circulation and helps create balance in the body. Once you're hooked, you won't be able to live without at least a weekly dose.

But be aware: There are many varieties of yoga. Find a licensed, reputable instructor and talk about your needs. Some classes focus on slow, relaxed movements; others incorporate tough, strengthening workouts.

I go once a week to keep my back healthy, reduce stress, and increase my flexibility. Try it out!

Sameta Rush is a fifth grade teacher at Strawberry Park Elementary School in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. E-mail her at: srush@sssd.k12.co.us.

NEA·HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ **NEW DRUG PREVENTION CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE**

TeachersGuide, a drug education resource developed by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, is now available. TeachersGuide activities offer ways to integrate drug prevention into the curriculum for students aged 11–14. Included: Internet links, teacher and student fact sheets, worksheets, and transparencies. To download and access other resources, go to www.teachersguide.org.

■ **RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ADULT AND ADOLESCENT IMMUNIZATION**

The National Coalition for Adult Immunization has released the *Resource Guide for Adult and Adolescent Immunization*, 5th edition. The catalog addresses the issue of immunization with emphasis on the top vaccine-preventable diseases in adults and adolescents. To order, go to: www.nfid.org/neai/publications/guide. The cost is $20 per guide.

■ **TOUR BREATHERVILLE, USA FOR A HOMETOWN APPROACH TO ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES**

Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics has created a web-based fictional town that teaches families about asthma and allergies in an interactive and fun way. By clicking on various buildings—pet shop, school, city hall, or market—visitors can obtain asthma and allergy information relevant to that setting. See: www.aanma.org/breatherville.htm to visit Breatherville.

■ **MENINGITIS INFORMATION AVAILABLE**

Meningitis is an infection in the fluids that surround the spinal cord and brain. It is usually caused by either a virus or bacterial infection. Knowing the difference is important. For more information from the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, log on to: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm.

Hammering Home A Victory

The nearly nine-pound ball swings on the end of a chain, making large circles in the air. With one swift, highly technical motion, the ball and chain are released and they soar through the air, ultimately landing hundreds of feet from where they started. This is hammer throwing, and **Anna Norgren Mahon** is, you could say, pretty good at it.

The English teacher at Amity High School in Orange, Connecticut, is ranked number one in the country and number 16 in the world in the event. She currently is training for the 2004 Summer Olympics.

After a high school career as a hurdler, Mahon began hammering in 1992 during her freshman year at the University of Vermont. She says she tried both hammer throwing and the shot put, but hammer throwing stuck.

"I love the fact that hammer throwing is super technical and it's a sport that always requires you to learn more and more to actually make yourself better," she says.

The skills Mahon acquired on the field translate naturally to her classroom. She says that hammering gives her a sense of self-discipline, focuses her, and lets her communicate with her students more directly. "It's all about getting better from week to week, which is what I tell my students," Mahon says.

As her training for 2004 picks up, Mahon often reflects on how far she has come since her freshman year in Vermont. She beat the American record holder for hammer throwing in 1998 and placed fourth at the Olympic Trials in 1999, all without a coach. Today, she trains six days a week while putting in full days at school.

"I've always told myself that I would stop doing what I do if I ever got sick of it, and that hasn't happened yet—not in hammering, and definitely not in teaching." ✔

Photos by Peter Glass

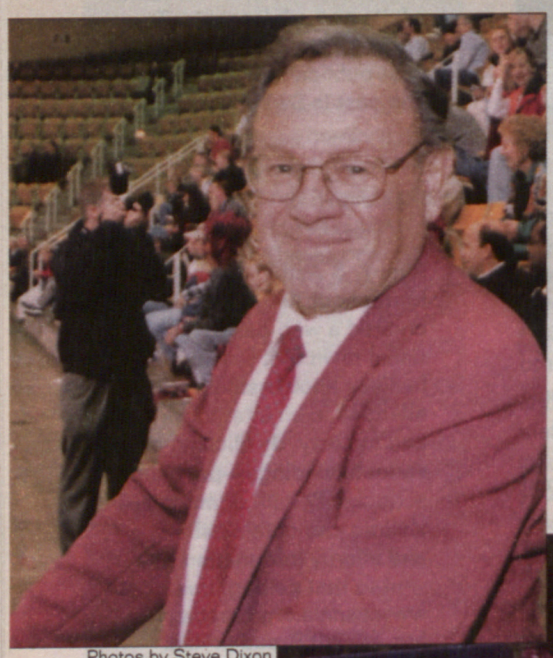
No-Shows for Charity Shows

To NEA-Retired member **Ed Bradley**, of Lincoln Park, New Jersey, an empty seat is a terrible thing to waste, especially when the seat can give a child the experience of a lifetime. That is the philosophy behind "No-Shows for Charity Shows," a program that provides unused sports and concert tickets to needy children.

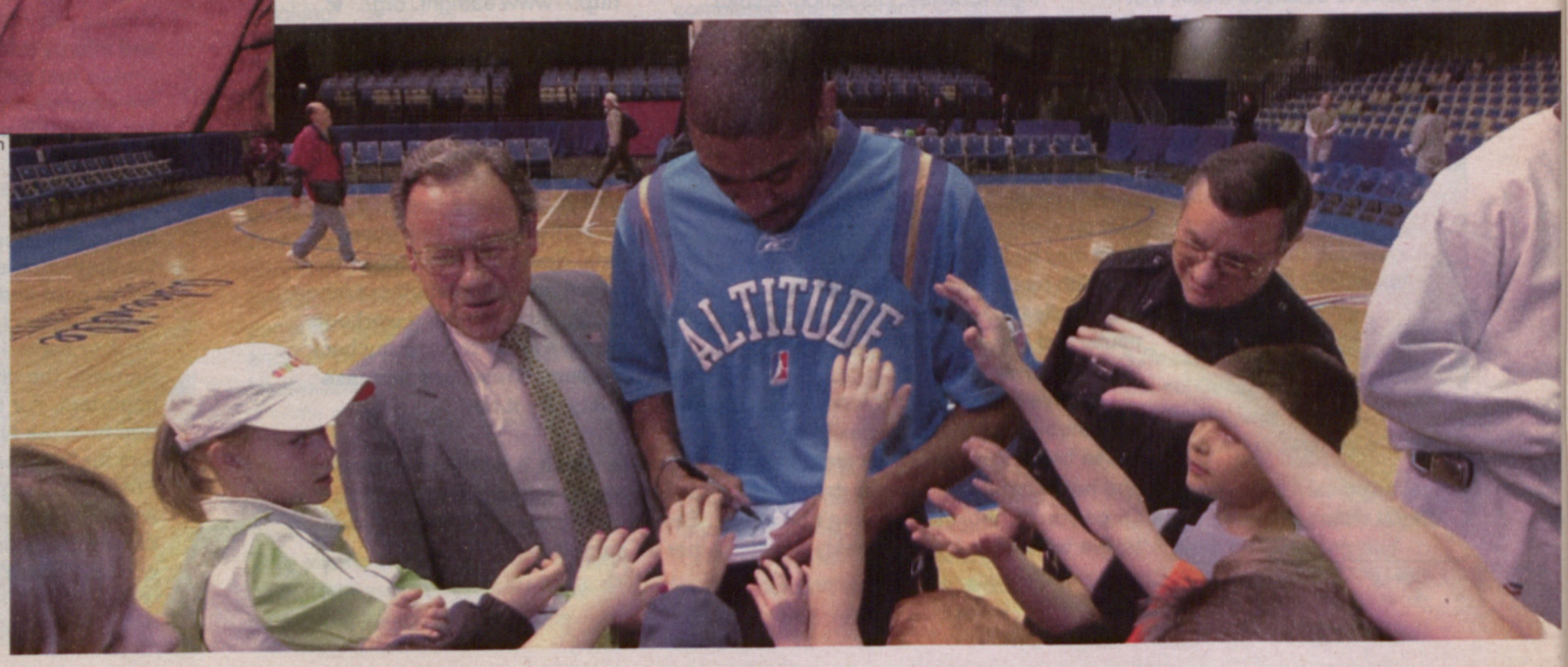
Since its creation, No-Shows has provided more than 72,000 unused event tickets to needy New Jersey children. Another 25,000 have been distributed to children in Pennsylvania, New York, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The tickets come from teams, franchises, corporations, and season ticket holders who donate tickets they aren't going to use. The tickets are then handed over to organizations such as the Young Men's Club of America, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and Catholic Charities.

For his efforts, Bradley has received countless awards and recognition by Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton.

"What's most important, however, is the success of this program and our ability to reach so many deserving children," says Bradley, who's about to expand No-Shows into a nationwide program. ✔



Photos by Steve Dixon



Tomorrow's Teachers

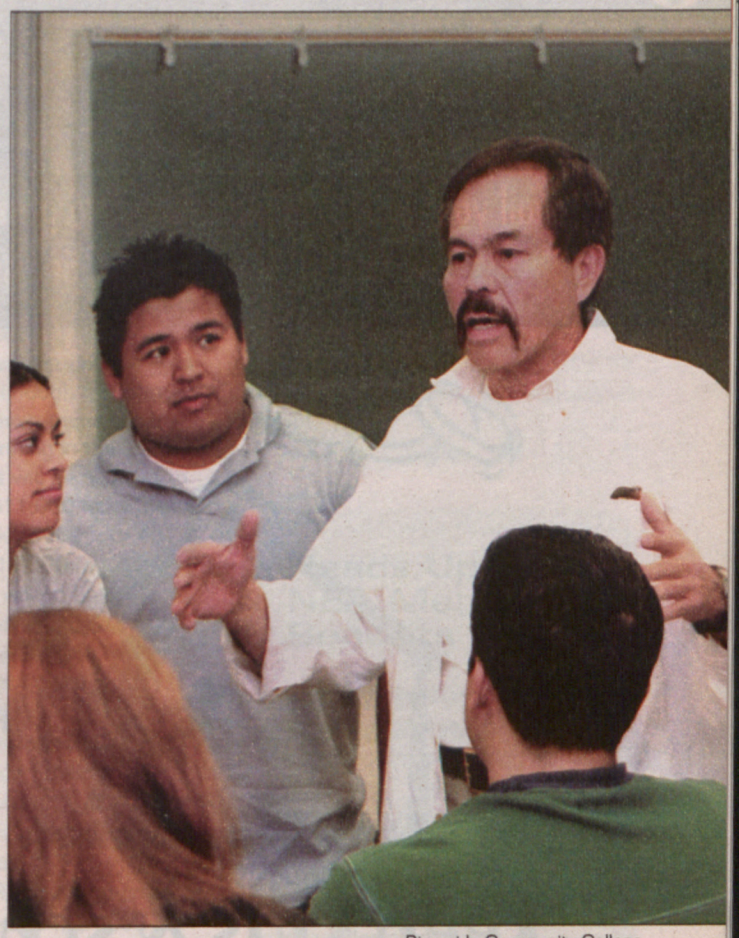
Clarence Romero, an associate professor of psychology at California's Riverside Community College, received a clear wake-up call a decade ago when he volunteered to become a "student for the day."

The experience gave Romero a new perspective on who his students were and where they came from. "I had many Latino students who were trying to find their way despite mediocre grades and little encouragement from their families," he says. "One setback, one bad grade was enough to dissuade them from pursuing higher education."

So Romero started Latino Educators of Tomorrow (LET) to encourage students to overcome mental and physical barriers, set personal goals, and take an active role in their education. LET also is an award-winning teacher-preparation program that has recruited hundreds of Latinos into the field of education.

Through the program, participants learn leadership skills, experience cultural activities, and work together to help others less fortunate than themselves.

"LET is built on the premise that to advance, we must help others," says Romero, a member of the California Community College Association. "My students are the ultimate professionals. Their success is a valuable lesson for all teachers. When we raise our expectations, students will rise to the challenge." ✔



Riverside Community College

The Leaf-Chronicle

On the Front Lines

For students in **Jolene Jenkins**' seventh grade classroom at Mahaffey Middle School, the war in Afghanistan is very close to home: They are the sons and daughters of Army and Air Force personnel who are stationed in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

"The events of the last five months have changed teachers' roles, especially for those of us on military posts," says Jenkins, the 2002 Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Teacher of the Year.

Jenkins has worked at Fort Campbell since 1987, and she uses her own experience as a "military wife" to reach out and connect with her students. She started an after-school mentoring program to assist academically struggling students and a reading partnership between her students and students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade classrooms. ✔

Bringing Education to Afghan Children

Like most Americans, **Catherine Larkin** is troubled about the devastating effects the Taliban rule has had on Afghanistan's children.

"It seems like there are new stories everyday about what these children have had to endure," says the Bangor, Maine, school social worker. "They had to hide to be educated, if they were educated at all."

Since the country's liberation, Larkin (pictured here, center) has searched for a way to help build back Afghanistan's educational programs. UNICEF's "Schools-in-a-Box" kit was her answer. Each kit costs $300 and contains enough school supplies and books to educate 80 Afghan children. Larkin, who chairs the Maine Education Association's Human and Civil Rights Committee, used this kit during a fundraiser at the Association's statewide professional issues conference in January. As a result, the Maine educators raised nearly $1,300 for the cause. "As people who work with children everyday, this is the most heartfelt and rewarding thing we could do," Larkin says. ✔

Keith Harvie

Join Now!

NEA's New Gun Safety Campaign

Email your name/home address to **gunsafety@list.nea.org** or visit NEA's Legislative Action Center at **www.nea.org/lac/** and select School Safety to send your message to Congress.

keep kids & schools safe

NEA-HIN ✦ GUN SAFETY CAMPAIGN

TOGETHER

We can DO SOMETHING to protect kids and schools from gun violence

Every day, nine children die from gun violence and at least 35 kids suffer from firearm-related injuries. American children are more at risk from firearms than the children of any other industrialized nation. And now terrorists are taking advantage of loopholes in current law to buy guns in the U.S.

Gun owners and non-gun owners agree that with rights come responsibilities. The issue is safety. A 2001 national poll showed that 86% of Americans support requiring background checks at gun shows and 78% of American gun owners support gun show background checks.

Tell Congress that educational employees want to close the gun show loophole NOW. Keep guns away from terrorists, criminals, and unsupervised children.

Join NEA's Gun Safety Campaign: Email your name/home address to gunsafety@list.nea.org or visit NEA's Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac/ and select School Safety to send your message to Congress.

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NEA-HIN • GUN SAFETY CAMPAIGN

www.neahin.org/gunsafety/

Sweeping Tax Changes Coming

Q: Recently, you talked about personal finance books. A great one is "Personal Finance for Dummies."

A: That's not exactly a question, but I welcome your comment and endorsement of the book. I've heard people say the same thing about the "Mutual Funds for Dummies" book by Eric Tyson. Many investors say they built their entire investment base with information from that book.

I think each of us is willing to admit that there are certain areas that we know very little about, where we are "dummies" and we are eager to get the most basic advice possible. Too many books talk over our heads.

Q: Can you tell me anything about the guidelines for teachers buying a house for half price?

A: I had to turn to the folks at NEA Member Benefits for help on this one. Here's what they tell me: The Teacher Next Door Program is a nationwide government program that offers single family homes acquired by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to teachers at 50% off their appraised value. HUD has acquired the homes because they were previously insured by another federal agency, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and then foreclosed on when owners did not continue the mortgage payments.

HUD defines a teacher as an individual employed full time by a public school, private school, or federal, state, county, or municipal education agency as a state-certified classroom teacher or administrator in grades K-12. The teacher does not have to be currently performing classroom duties.

Teacher Next Door properties are located in areas designated by HUD as revitalization areas, typically in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. To qualify for the program, a teacher need not be a first-time home buyer; however, the teacher cannot own any other residential real estate. A teacher must purchase a home in the same school district or jurisdiction in which he or she is employed and must live in the home as a sole resident for at least three years. He or she may then sell it and take the profits.

If the home is purchased with an FHA-insured mortgage, the down payment is just $100. Down payments for other types of mortgages vary. The home can be purchased directly from HUD or with the help of a broker. Teacher Next Door properties are listed on HUD's Web site at www.hud.gov/tnd. More information about this program, including details on financing, is available from NEA Member Benefits at 800/NEA-4-YOU (800/632-4968) or online at www.neamb.com/loans/hmftnd.html.

Q: Every year I look for a way to cut my taxes, and I always realize I'm too late. Any good news for me this year?

A: Not much. But wait until next year! For 2001, you can still do the typical things like put money in an IRA if you have income from tutoring or consulting. Also make certain you deduct expenses from any sideline business you have. That's about it.

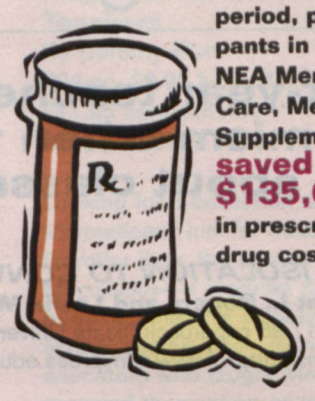
But there are sweeping tax changes coming into effect in 2002, many of them affecting retirement plan savings. Many Americans have not been saving enough for retirement, and the government is getting the picture. Beginning in the 2002 tax year, workers will be allowed to set aside up to $11,000 from their salaries for 401(k), 403(b), or 457 plans, up from $10,500 for 2001, and that amount will go up by $1,000 a year until it hits $15,000 in 2006. In addition, workers who participate in both 403(b) and 457 plans can contribute the maximum amount allowable to both plans. This change is a particularly welcome one for those with 457 plans who could set aside only $8,500 under the old rules.

In addition, IRA limits go up to $3,000 for 2002–2004, $4,000 for 2005–2007, and then to $5,000 in 2008. These are not changes to be sneezed at. The difference in retirement savings can be substantial for those who tuck away the new maximums.

There are also some happy developments in the "paying for college" department. The state-sponsored programs named after section 529 of the tax code (529 programs) get a big boost because the earnings can be withdrawn tax free if used to pay for college. Further, contribution limit for education IRAs goes up to $2,000 for 2002.

So, the short answer to your question is no, there is little you can do in the next couple of weeks, but you might be surprised about what can be done for your 2002 tax bill.

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.



In a recent three-month period, participants in the NEA MemberCare, Medicare Supplement Plan saved over $135,000 in prescription drug costs.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Get ready for summer by equipping yourself with the convenience of "calling at your fingertips." Take advantage of one of the newest NEA Member Benefits programs: NEA Cellular.

NEA Cellular offers you great deals on digital telephones and cellular service. You get to pick out a free phone (after rebate) from some of the top names in cellular telephone equipment, like Nokia, Ericsson, and Motorola.

Second, major wireless service providers participate in NEA Cellular. Members can choose one of the available carriers in their area, including AT&T Wireless, Verizon, Cingular, Voicestream, and WorldCom. Members are also guaranteed the lowest published carrier rates—a very attractive feature!

But that's not all. Orders include free shipping and a free cellular telephone accessory pack that consists of an in-car charger, hands-free kit, and belt clip. Soon, NEA Cellular will allow members the option to customize their phones to receive news, weather, and other wireless updates. All orders are shipped within 24 hours.

NEA Cellular customer service representatives are dedicated to excellent customer support and will assist members in the ordering process, including how to determine which option is most suitable for their needs.

For more information or to place an order, visit the NEA Member Benefits Web site at www.neamb.com or call NEA Cellular toll-free at 866/327-2219.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Marcia Fox, a sixth grade teacher from Warmego, Kansas, and Tiffany Hayes, a content mastery teacher in Leander, Texas.

Fox: My tip is to help organize lunch count and attendance in the mornings. When my students enter the room I have Popsicle sticks with their names on them lying on the table by the door. There is also a monthly menu taped to the table and three cups labeled hot lunch, salad bar, and not eating/sack lunch. Students place their Popsicle stick into the cup that shows their choice for the day. I can count the sticks in each cup and fill out the lunch count slip. It's also very easy to tell who is absent. All this is done without roll call or disrupting the quiet thinking time.

Hayes: Students who leave my classroom to return to general education classes often completely 'forget' to return to class. To solve this problem, I had my hall passes printed on carbonless, duplicate paper. Now, when I write a pass with the departure time on it, the student gets one copy and I save the other copy to drop in the general education teacher's box. The teacher is also kept informed about when that student left class.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

Breaking Through Isolation

First-year teachers retain their optimism when they can openly talk about classroom traumas.

FROM ISOLATION TO CONVERSATION
By **Dwight L. Rogers and Leslie M. Babinski**
135 pp. $17.95 paperback (State University of New York Press)
To order visit http://www.sunypress.edu/.

EXCERPT

"...As the new teachers realized that they weren't the only ones having difficulty in their first year, they drew strength from the group and were able to see their issues from multiple perspectives. The groups provided these teachers with the chance to share their successes and failures, raise questions and concerns, and in the process provide each other with much-needed social and emotional support."

In her first year as a teacher, Rebecca—who teaches third-grade in the rural South—said: "I never expected my first year to be like this. I never thought I'd feel so down and so incompetent... there have been times I've felt so small that I couldn't even scrape myself off of the floor."

According to *From Isolation to Conversation*, Rebecca is not alone. In fact for many new teachers, the first year of teaching is stressful, discouraging, and disorienting.

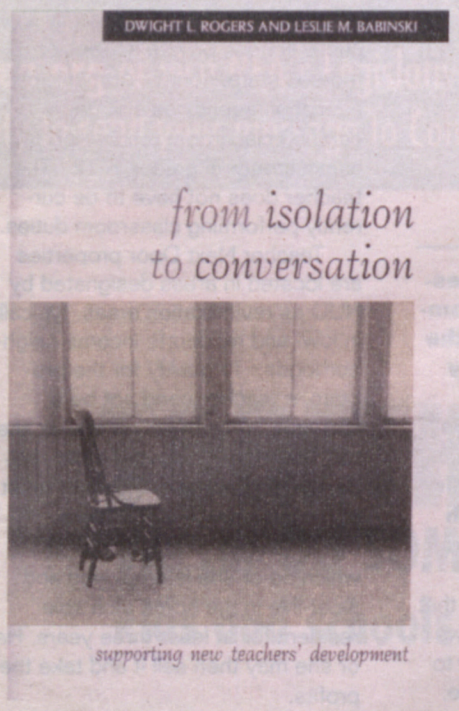
Isolation and lack of community are among the biggest obstacles faced by beginning teachers, say the authors. This is why the pair set out to document the devastating effects that isolation can have on those new to the profession.

To help alleviate this isolation, the authors created "New Teacher Groups" to assist beginning teachers and better understand their problems. Led by university facilitators, 49 new teachers met biweekly in small groups for three years to discuss issues and challenges.

During the group time, new teachers presented the problems they were having in their classrooms, and worked together to gain a clearer conception of the problem, as well as an appropriate resolution.

This book is a collection of their efforts. Its pages are filled with research about new teacher issues, as well as comments from the participating teachers that candidly narrate the challenges common to many novices.

The most important lesson the



book offers: Providing regularly scheduled, thoughtfully structured opportunities for beginning teachers to talk with, listen to, and help each other work through the myriad of challenges they encounter during their first years.

The authors contend that in order for beginning teachers to develop into successful teachers who stay in the profession, there must be a "safe place" for them to "air their uncertainties and to get the kind of feedback necessary to reduce the anxiety about being a good teacher."

The absence of this safe space, they say, contributes to feelings of isolation, which helps drive nearly 50 percent of new teachers out of the profession within their first five years.

What makes New Teacher Groups different than other beginning teacher support initiatives, they write, is the relevance it has to new teachers' daily work.

Participants used their time together to focus on individual children and their families, working with other adults, school policies and politics, and classroom management.

"It is through these collaborative conversations with colleagues that these new teachers begin to ask who they are and inquire more seriously into what kind of teachers they want to become," write the authors.

Nearly two-thirds of the group members said the process provided them with the kind of support they needed.

"It's one thing to talk to your mentor about things...but the other beginning teachers [in New Teacher Groups] can relate to you so much more because they are going through the same thing," says Lucille, a participating third-grade teacher.

The book is a must-read for anyone who is implementing a new teacher support program. It would also help any teacher who is struggling with the first year to realize they are not alone in their feelings. ✔

—By Dina S. Gómez

BOOKS by NEA Members

Putting Words Into Your Mouth: A Collection of Witticisms and Inspirational Sayings

By Charles E. "Skip" Bird
This book, published on CD-ROM, contains more than 600 pages and 11,000 humorous and inspirational quotes. The author is a retired swimming coach and English teacher who started the book by filling a file folder with some quotes—similar to what teachers might have in their desks. Numerous quotes by noted personalities are also included. $19.95 plus $4 s&h. Send check to Bird Publishing, 1600 Edgewater Beach Road, Valparaiso, IN 46383-1185.

Let's Teach Smarter, Not Harder

By Wanda M. Hordyk

This is a simplified guide to help teachers ensure that all students achieve active learning and higher level thinking skills while incorporating "real-life" concepts in the daily lessons. The book includes rubrics, checklists, and various reproducible resource sheets to help teachers assess and evaluate lessons as well as teaching techniques. Here's the proof in accountability! $29.95 plus $3 s&h. To order call toll free at 877/260-5414, E-mail to 16115@go.com, or send checks to Wanda Hordyk, P.O. Box 73207, Puyallup, WA 98373-9778. (Bulk discounts available.)

Philosophy

By James E. Kasmarek

This senior high electives series presents a view of the behavioral sciences that explores relevant topics of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and philosophy in a systematic manner so that students can pursue these studies scientifically, using higher level thinking skills. The teacher edition ($37.95) contains 40 lesson plans and 64 reproducible student handouts. The student edition ($10.95) contains all of the handouts in the teacher edition. Shipping charges apply. Order from The Center for Learning by calling toll free 800/767-9090.

Life's Literacy Lessons: Poems for Teachers

By Steven L. Layne

NEA member Steven Layne has gathered 40 of his favorite poems about literacy and teaching into this unique collection that will touch the heart of anyone who has ever been a classroom teacher. The poems range from serious to hilarious as Layne delightfully takes poetic license with the stuff of teachers' daily lives: beginning readers, grammar, spelling, composition instruction, adolescent literacy issues, reading aloud, and teaching standards. $9.95 through the International Reading Association. Members receive a 20% discount. Call 800/336-READ, x266 to order.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

The Latest On Service Learning

Each year, more and more students are incorporating service to their communities into their school schedules. Recently, the National Commission on Service-Learning issued a report, recommending that all students k-12 should participate in a quality service learning project. For a free 20-minute video, copy of the Commission's report, and executive summary, contact the W. K. Kellogg Foundation at 800/819-9997.

Living During The Civil War

The recording on CD is called *Spy! The Story of Civil War Spy Elizabeth VanLew.* In spite of living in the Confederate capitol, she was a passionate abolitionist and became a spy for the Union. This is her story and much of it comes from the diary she kept. $12 per CD; $10 per audiocassette; $2 for s&h. Order by calling 757/625-6742; by mail: Lynn Ruehlmann, 621 New Hampshire Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23508, or E-mail: ruehlmann@erols.com.

Boats from All Over

For thousands of years we have made boats from whatever materials were on hand. If timber was available, rafts and dugout canoes were created; in other places, reeds and animal skins were used.

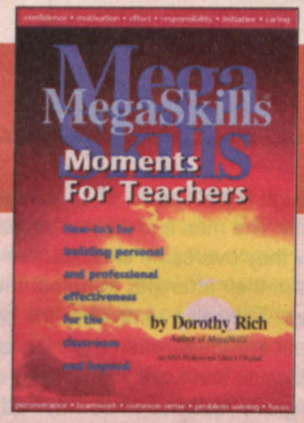
Traditional Boats from Around the World, a coloring book by A. G. Smith, contains 44 carefully researched and accurately rendered illustrations of boats through history, including dugout canoes, Welsh coracles, an Arab dhow, and many others. Brief captions accompany the detailed illustrations. $3.95. To order go to www.doverpublications.com.

Effective Researching

Research papers can often be overwhelming for students who have not had practice doing them. Picking a topic, finding significant information on it, and presenting the paper can all be challenging. With *Researching Issues*, students have a resource to guide them through the process of using the library and the Internet to gather information. The book also helps them credit sources and manage their time effectively. *Researching Issues*, by Maity Schrecengost, is available for $8.95 through UpstartBooks. Call 800/448-4887.

Dolls and Teddies

Steven Micheal Wikert and Mary McMurray Wikert, art educators for almost 30 years, present this book of photographs of children with their dolls. *Cherish Me Always, A Century of Dolls, Antique Photographs of Children with Dolls* features an extensive collection of 229 vintage photos and poems to go along with the pictures. The book provides an interesting narrative and a view to America's past. Another book, *Cherish Me Always, Teddy Bears and Warm Fuzzies, Antique Photographs of Children with Stuffed Toys* by the same authors celebrates the centennial of the Teddy Bear with 158 vintage photos of children with their beloved teddy bears and toys. The book is in full color and in album format. Each of these titles is available from Hobby House Press for $19.95. Call 800/554-1447 or go to www.hobbyhouse.com.



NEW from the NEA Professional Library

MegaSkills: Moments for Teachers
By Dorothy Rich
204 pp. $9.95 NEA Members
$11.95 nonmembers
#2006-5-00-FN

Looking for a collection of "daily affirmations" just for educators? Dorothy Rich, the creator of MegaSkills—a program designed to build children's achievement in school and beyond—found that educators who taught MegaSkills renewed themselves as well. Now she has harnessed that renewal into this book. Through vignettes and questions, you'll learn how to easily and quickly turn everyday problem situations into opportunities for personal and professional growth. An inspiring gift for beginning and seasoned educators alike!

EXCERPT

The Problem—Getting Evaluated on the Job
I'll be evaluated soon and I'm nervous. How can I show that I know what I'm doing?

MegaSkill Moment
The principal observed my class and said he was very impressed, especially with the pacing of my presentations. Before the evaluation, I audiotaped a few sessions and listened hard. Then I used a video recorder and watched myself and the kids. Ievaluated myself and learned a lot. I made some changes that helped me shine.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

By Amy C. Laundrie

NEA member Amy Laundrie has authored six children's books. *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing* is about Kayla who gets lost on a trail ride and stumbles on a house in the woods. An older man screams at her to leave, but before Kayla turns to go she spots an elderly woman in the window who mouths the words, *Help me.* Kayla decides to investigate. $7. Order from Amy Laundrie, 918 Pine Drive, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965.

TVTIPS

Egypt: The Land of the Gods

The History Channel, April 8–9, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

This two-part series explores the religion of Egypt. Emphasizing the role of the supernatural and ancient myths and truths, this program examines the transformation of religion throughout the history of Egypt. The program explores the Pyramid Power, Moses, and worship of Ra, the Sun God. Following this world premiere, *Egypt: Beyond the Pyramids* will re-air April 10–11 to collaborate the Egyptian theme week.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., provides these listings. For additional listings, check the web at www.kidsnet.org.

TVTIPS

Resistance: Untold Stories of Jewish Partisans

PBS, April 4, 10:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

In honor of Holocaust Remembrance Month, this documentary takes a look at the heroic Jewish resistance efforts against the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II, told through the accounts of 11 participants. The men and women reveal how they overcame enormous obstacles in their attempts to defeat the Nazis. They also remember the bittersweet aftermath when they, like other Holocaust survivors, were faced with the grave reality of what they had lost. For related information, including lesson plans, go to www.scetv.org/holocaustforum/contents.html.

CNN Presents: Kids Under Pressure

CNN, April 13–14, 10:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

For today's high school seniors, getting into the right college requires a top-notch resume reflecting a life jammed with clubs, activities, sports, jobs, and good grades. Producers of this *CNN Presents* special spent a year with three "kids under pressure" as they navigate their crowded lives, moving from band to baseball practice to class, from homework and to friends. How much is too much? How much does it matter? This special provides interviews with the three seniors, their parents, their friends, and the admission officers who ultimately make the decision.

Antarctica: A Frozen History

The History Channel, April 15, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

In 1773, Captain James Cook crossed the Antarctic Circle and discovered a new continent—Antarctica. Since then explorers from all over the globe have set out to conquer this frozen wilderness. From Ernest Shackleton to Roald Amundsen to Robert Scott, this one-hour presentation looks at the stories of courage, human fortitude, and deception around the brave explorers who set out to conquer Antarctica.

Broken Silence

Cinemax, April 15–19, ET, check local listings

In honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom Hashoah, Cinemax is airing *Broken Silence*, a five-part Holocaust documentary series presented by Steven Spielberg and the Shoah Foundation. A key part in a global effort to increase awareness of the Holocaust as a means of countering the devastating impact of intolerance in the world, each foreign-language documentary in the series resonates with the language and culture of the film's director. Documentaries include: *I Remember* (Poland), *Eyes of the Holocaust* (Hungary), *Some Who Lived* (Argentina), *Hell on Earth* (Czech Republic), *Children of the Abyss* (Russia).

Frontier House

PBS, April 29, 9:00 p.m., ET, check local listings.

This six-hour "hands-on" history series provides a unique account of one of the most important, and often romanticized, periods in American

Who is Horace Mann?

We have a plan

The first step in building is developing a clear blueprint. Fuzzy sketches won't do. It's the same with homeowners insurance.

designed

Horace Mann wants to construct a protection plan for you. We've underwritten the NEA Homeowners® Insurance Program for more than 30 years. And as an NEA member, you receive special benefits.

for you.

To find out more about the NEA Homeowners® Insurance Program, call your local Horace Mann agent. Or call 1-800-999-1030 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday CST.

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history. Three modern-day American families are transported back in time to live in the Montana wilderness for six months as settlers from the 1880s. Viewers watch as the families set out in covered wagons with only the tools and technology of the period. They build their own houses, work the land, slaughter animals, and dress just as the pioneers before them. The months prove difficult, and the families face many challenges, including blizzards, coyotes, and hunger. However, their frustrations and their triumphs offer an extraordinary glimpse into American history.

Great Books

The Discovery Channel, April, ET, check local listings.

In conjunction with its prime-time theme week, two episodes of *Assignment Discovery's* literature-studies series will explore American history through Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff.*

The Rockies

The History Channel, April, ET, check local listings.

This four-part series from the *History Channel Classroom* explores the history of Colorado's Rocky Mountains through the explorers, historic events, and technological advances that helped create it. This program takes a look at the men and women who made a fortune out of its wilderness and also the people who lost that great wilderness, the native Indians who once hunted the valleys and fished the mountain streams.

Oceans: Going to Great Depths

CNN, CNN Student News, April, ET, check local listings.

This *CNN Student News* presentation looks at the development of underwater technology. Throughout the program, viewers will learn how robo-cams and mini-subs are used underwater to locate everything from shipwrecks to deep water organisms. A companion Web site containing additional information and resources can be found at www.CNNstudentnews.com.

Flipped

MTV, check local listings.

This half-hour series uses Hollywood's best illusionists in special effects, make-up and set design to create simulated scenarios. The series places teens in a number of settings from prisons to schools to hospitals; and enlists the help of real doctors, teachers, and police officers to enhance the authenticity of each situation. The simulated scenarios that result are so real they have the power to transform the teen's perspective forever. "Flipped" follows its subjects through their experiences to witness the epiphanies, the heightened sense of understanding, and the appreciation that results from walking in someone else's shoes. Episodes cover various subjects such as racism, homophobia, drugs, gangs, and parental relationships. Additional informational resources can be found on the MTV website at www.mtv.com.

Beyond the Border

PBS, April 2002, ET, check local listings.

This documentary traces the painful transition made by four sons who leave their family in Mexico to seek "la vida buena" (the good life) in Kentucky. By following the Ayala brothers as they relocate to the Bluegrass region, Beyond the Border presents the range of complexities surrounding the immigration experience, including the responsibility to family, community, and culture. Viewers see firsthand the results of the way the U.S.-Mexico border is policed and learn the effects of economic and racial discrimination on Mexican immigrants.

The Blue Planet: Seas of Life

Discovery Channel, May 5, 7:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings, The seas and coasts of the world come alive on the Discovery Channel's special on life below the water's surface. Amazing images accompany narration by Sir David Attenborough in the four episodes. You can see how climactic changes

produce different kinds of life under the sea in Seasonal Seas, and how the coral reef is a complex ecosystem on which millions of animals survive in Coral Seas. Also, learn more about tidal changes and how certain sea life are dependent on the tides in Tidal Seas. Lastly, in Coasts, you can see the different wildlife that thrive on the coasts.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Puzzling People

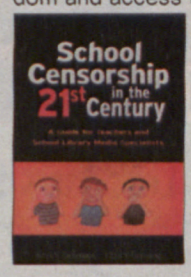
Give your students a challenge by providing them with clues and letting them use inference and research to figure out whom you are talking about. *Famous People Puzzles*, written by Carolyn Powell, provides students with the necessary clues, in the form of postcards, letters, and quotes and lets them figure out who the famous person is. It also provides the teacher with a background on the person. A creative way to teach kids about famous artists, explorers, and scientists, *Famous People Puzzles* is available through Dandy Lion Publications. To order go to www.dandylionbooks.com.

Bridging the Gap

Incorporating art into subjects such as math and science has never been easy, but with *Bridging the Curriculum Through Art*, teachers can begin to use artistic devices to enhance learning across many different subjects. For example, the book suggests having students do a self-portrait using the "Golden Mean" and aspects of symmetry. Teachers can also incorporate art into the social studies curriculum by analyzing photos and paintings from different eras. Full of ideas and activities, *Bridging the Curriculum Through Art* is available through Crystal Productions. Call 800/255-8629.

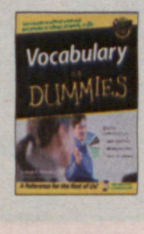
Fighting Censorship

Censorship is a constantly changing issue, especially with the vast freedom and access to information the Internet has provided. *School Censorship in the 21st Century: A Guide for Teachers and School Library Media Specialists* provides a view of challenges to students' right to read and teachers' right to choose books and other materials. The volume also offers insights into current censorship challenges and the historical and cultural context in which they appear. Use *School Censorship in the 21st Century*, written by John S. Simmons and Eliza T. Dresang, to learn the latest about censorship and how you can prevent it from happening at your school. Published by the International Reading Association. To order go to www.reading.org.



Vocabulary Savvy

Feel like your vocabulary's getting a little dry? Well, maybe you should pick up *Vocabulary for Dummies* to learn some new words and to find out where some of the words you use already come from. A straightforward book, *Vocabulary for Dummies* gives the reader a base to begin with and then slowly progresses through the roots of words and vocabulary building. It even shows the reader how to use financial and engineering vocabulary easily. $19.99 from Dummies Press. To order call 650/653-7000 or go to www.dummies.com.



Impress with Impressionism

Be your own Impressionist artist with *Monet and the Impressionists for Kids*. With 21 activities and the works of seven Impressionists included, this book lets students learn about the artists as well as try some of their styles. Full of color pictures, *Monet and the Impressionists for Kids* is a book to read for fun as well as an educational tool for teachers who want to provide historical context. $17.95 from Chicago Review Press. To order go to www.ipgbook.com.

Setting the Foundation

In the book series, Building America, ramond Bial notes that the very first farmers who came to the New World essentially set America's foundation. Farms led the way to mills, forts, canals, and houses. In this series, Bial explores each of these structures and how its development had an impact on new settlers. Full of maps, drawings, and photos, this series, *Building America*, shows the development and evolution of the New World with *The Farms*, *The Mills*, *The Forts*, *The Canals*, and *The Houses*. Each book is available for $17.95 through Benchmark Books. To order call 914/332-8888.

The Ultimate Educational Guidebook to Our Nation's Capital

This comprehensive guide provides information on the best attractions, historic sites, parks, shops, and restaurants for parents and teachers who visit Washington, D.C. Whether it's a vacation or field trip, *Washington, D.C. with Kids 2002–2003* offers visitors a new way

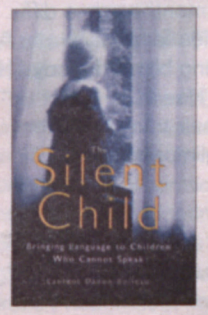
of experiencing the city. With kids in mind, this guide to a successful trip offers money-savers, time-savers, family-friendly hotels and restaurants, and many other activities for every part of the metropolitan area. Discover great educational activities including the Capital Scavenger Hunt. $16.95. Order by calling 800/800-3246 or visit www.primapublishing.com/ books/categories/207.

Revamping Library Sites

The look of library Web sites is changing in order to stay up to speed with today's Internet-savvy teenagers. Libraries have begun chat rooms for teenagers as well as ways to send in pieces that they have written to be posted on the Web site. This is a book for librarians and anyone interested in how to provide traditional library services with teen appeal. The resource, *Teens.library: Developing Internet Services for Young Adults* written by Linda W. Braun, also goes through the technical aspects that must be taken into consideration when incorporating new factors into a library site. $28 from the American Library Association. To order call 866/746-7252.

Silent Struggle

Imagine helping a child sort out his or her problems, both developmental and emotional, without the benefit of communication. In Laurent Danon-Boileau's book *The Silent Child*, he takes the reader through the lives of six children who are struggling with language and reading. These children's silence stems from psychological conflict, neurological effects of trauma, or cognitive failure, and Danon-Boileau studies why these children cannot speak and what progress they are able to make. *The Silent Child* is available from Oxford University Press for $25. To order call 212/726-6000.

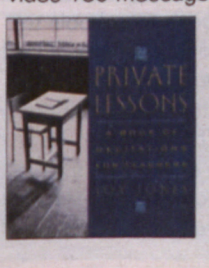


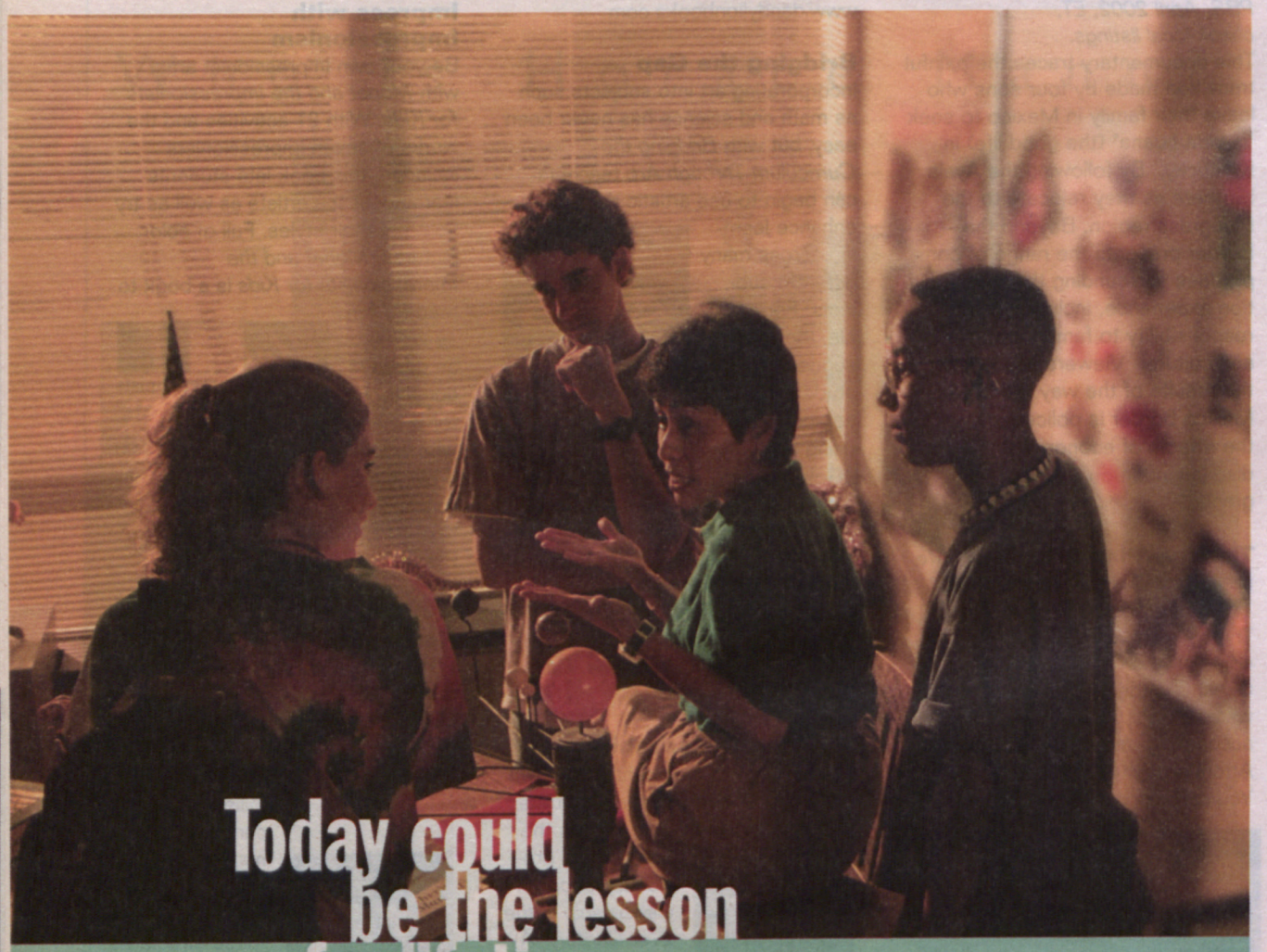
The Right Stuff

Ever wonder what it's like to sit at the controls of a test plane? *At the Controls: The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Book of Cockpits* contains over 100 pages of detailed photographs of famous planes and their cockpits and puts you right behind the wheel of aviation's historically significant and most advanced machines. See 45 of the most legendary cockpits of all time in this rare and stunning collection, with ample text accompanying each entry. Students can compare the austere, simple interior of Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, to the high-tech buttons and switches of commercial jets, lunar landers, and the space shuttle Columbia. If you're teaching a unit on aviation or are interested in airplanes, you'll love this book. Visit www.si.edu/sites/exhibit/atcontrols.htm for an online version of the book. (hard cover cost $39.95.) To order go to www.bostonmillspress.com/home.cfm.

Focus, Insight, and Creativity

For those days when you could use a little extra dose of inspiration and motivation, *Private Lessons: A Book of Meditations for Teachers* provides 180 messages—one for every school day of the year—that are sure to renovate the enthusiasm and nourish the personal growth of teachers at





Let's face it. Health class isn't enough to counter all the bad information kids are getting about drugs. So whether you teach science, social studies, theater or language arts, we're making it easy to incorporate drug awareness education into the standards-based material you already need to cover. Log on to **www.teachersguide.org** to find classroom activities designed to help you talk about drugs with your students.

Anti-drug lessons last a lifetime.

TEACHERS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

every level everywhere. Each day offers an anecdote, a lesson supporting such themes as growth, opportunity, flexibility, and acceptance, and a quote by a notable like Rosa Parks, Helen Keller, Margaret Thatcher, or Mahatma Gandhi. This absorbing volume by Joy Jones is available from Andrews McMeel Publishing. $10.95. To order call 816/932-6700.

Corvettes, 'Cudas

This wonderful collection of car drawings, *American Muscle Cars (1960–1975)*,

written and illustrated by Bruce LaFontaine, was created for children aged 8 to 12 and for adults. The "muscle cars" of the 1960s and early 70s had lots of horsepower, large V-8 engines, and were available in many types and sizes. Forty-four models—all shown in a variety of commercial and residential settings—include such memorable vehicles as the 1962 Ford Thunderbird, the 1964 Corvette Stingray, the 1968 Chevy Impala SS427, the 1970 Ford Torino Cobra, and many more. For each car, a caption describes elements of style, engine size, power generated by the motor, and other data. $3.95. To order go to www.doverpublications.com.

Light Reading

Young students love jokes and this selection of groaners will be sure to entice struggling readers as well as budding class clowns. *Monster Jokes* lists jokes about monsters, vampires, and such, in 11 sections:

What did the vampire clerk shout to the people in the checkout line? "Okay! Who's necks?"

Which piece of exercise equipment did a mad doctor invent? The Frankenstair Master.

Why don't skeletons host T.V. Talk shows? Because they have nobody to talk with.

Got the idea? *Monster Jokes*, written by Michael J. Pellowski and illustrated by Jeff Sinclair, has an index including terms like banshee, 'Jaws', and Yeti. This book will appeal to children of all ages, especially older kids who like to see adults suffer. $14.95. To order go to www.sterlingpub.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

More Reading, Less TV—A Proven Literacy Program

TV-Turnoff Network recently launched this 4-week grammar school program proven to improve children's ability to read. Students are encouraged to develop a deep enjoyment for reading and reduce the amount of time spent watching television. A central theme of the program is the challenge to "Bury the Television with Books" using colorful strips of paper which students are awarded for each book they read. This year's program also includes a More Poetry Supplement. Teachers' guides are available online. And—be sure to participate in "TV-Turnoff Week" April 22–28, 2002. Visit www.tvturnoff.org.

Child Safety Program

Seventy-nine percent of all poison control center calls involve children—64 percent involve children under age 5. Although children 5 and under make up 9 percent of the country's population, they account for 19 percent of home fire deaths, a risk twice that of the general population. Safety Tots International has produced *What's The Safest Thing To Do?*, an interactive learning product available on CD-ROM and flash cards. The program educates children aged 4 to 8 on how to safely react to dangerous situations they may encounter. Includes scenarios dealing with fire prevention, drug and stranger awareness, electrical dangers, poisons, firearms, and other potential hazards. For more information and prices go to www.safetytots.com.

WEB WINNERS

Students Can Be Part of NASA Mission

Two new curriculum modules that have been developed as part of the NASA Deep Impact mission (currently in development) are being offered free of charge online at http://deepimpact.umd.edu/educ/educres.html. *Collaborative Decision Making* is designed to engage students in grades 7–12 in activities that focus on collaboration and communication strategies. These activities will strengthen student understanding of and ability to use collaborative processes and communication practices to clarify, conceptualize, and make decisions. *Excavating Cratering* is designed to engage students in conducting scientific inquiries and in gaining greater understanding of scientific modeling. Launch of the Deep Impact spacecraft is scheduled for January 2004.

Photographs Vividly Capture Changes of Last Century

Old photographs are time machines. They allow us to look back in history, freeze a moment in time, and imagine ourselves as part of the past. *Picturing the Century: One Hundred Years of Photography from the National Archives*, offers a visual

tour of the past century. *Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island ... the Wright Brothers fly ... building the Empire State Building ... footprints on the Moon ... war in the Persian Gulf ...* and more. This exhibition is arranged in chronological "galleries" as well as seven "portfolios" of talented photographers. Print reproductions available. Go to www.nara.gov/exhall/picturing_the_century.

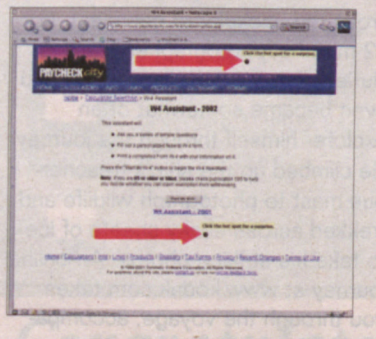
The Ultimate Resource for Book Shoppers

Don't give up trying to locate that hard-to-find book. A free new Web service, www.bookfinder.com, allows readers to comparison shop

for new, used, and rare books from any of 40,000 bookstores around the world. Bookfinder.com is recommended to book lovers by the *New York Times* and the Library of Congress and for folks who buy and sell books for a living. The site contains more than 30 million titles! Go to www.bookfinder.com.

Paycheck Deductions

This Web site will help you understand all the deductions that appear on your paycheck and that incomprehensible W-4 form. Calculate and



print out the data you enter. Related links on this site include payroll and taxes, tax preparation, the IRS, and the Social Security Administration. Go to www.paycheckcity.com/W4/w4instruction.asp.

Eighty Years Later—In Its Sixth Edition

The *Columbia Encyclopedia* began its existence in the 1920s when Clarke Fisher Ansley and Columbia University Press recognized the need for a "first aide" for those who read. Now in its sixth edition, it continues to serve the purposes for which it was conceived. Containing nearly 51,000 entries and with more than 80,000 hypertext cross-references, the current sixth edition is among the most complete and up-to-date encyclopedia ever produced. Go to www.bartleby.com/65.

Figure This

The award-winning *Figure This!* Web site—www.figurethis.org— offers intriguing mathematical challenges such as: "Can FloJo outrun a car?" and "Will women ever earn as much money as men?" New challenges are added to the Web site regularly,

so if you haven't checked it out in a while, you are bound to find something new and interesting there. The Web site offers math resources for middle school students and their parents, teachers, and communities. The central feature of the Web site is the collection of math challenges, available in both Spanish and English. All online materials on the site can be downloaded for free and reprinted for distribution. Print copies of the family support materials and of Spanish language challenge booklets are also available by calling 877/GO-SOLVE or by contacting Marji Heberlee at 202/667-0901.

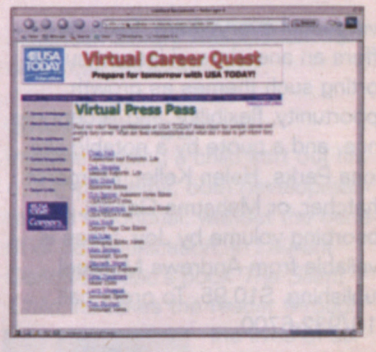
Test of the Endurance

In the frigid winter of 1914, two dozen explorers set sail for Antarctica aboard the Endurance, attempting to be the first ones to

cross the unexplored continent. For 22 months, photographer Frank Hurley documented their ordeal and even became somewhat of an explorer himself through the journey. He climbed up the ship's treacherous mast to photograph wildlife and trekked across shaky sheets of ice to take his striking photos. An online journey at www.kodak.com takes you through the voyage, accompanied by Hurley's pictures.

Press Pass

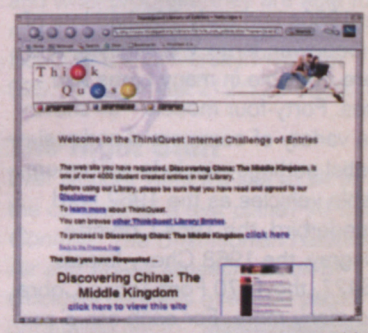
Being a good journalist often requires a lot of hard work and often, a little bit of luck. With *USA Today's* Virtual Press Pass, students can get an idea of what different writers do on an everyday basis, how managing editors do their job, and general insights about the field of journalism. Many of the writers talk about their backgrounds in the field and how they envision *USA*



Today and journalism in the next ten years. Look at what these men and women have to say at www.usatoday.com/educate/careers/uppindex.htm.

Uncovering China

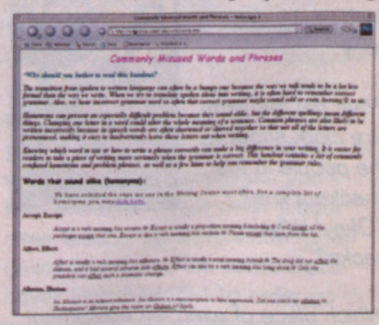
A comprehensive guide to China and its rich history, this Web site provides details of the country's past starting with 1839. It also provides a list of cities in China and


Think Quest
Welcome to the ThinkQuest Internet Challenge of Entries
Discovering China: The Middle Kingdom
click here to view this site

their importance, both today and historically. Finally, you can take a quiz to see how much you learned and participate in a poll or post your thoughts about the country on a message board. Go to http://library.thinkquest.org/26469/history.

Homonym Helper

Homonyms, or words that sound the same but have different meanings, can often be confusing when writing. With http://wsuonline.weber.edu/wrh/words.htm, though, you can fig-



ure out the differences between some of those problem words like effect and affect, lie and lay, or allusion and illusion. The site has a link to common errors in English at the bottom of the page that is also helpful. Improve you grammar and help your students learn about the subtle differences in the English language through this site.

Animals Galore

Animal lover? Well then, www.bbc.co.uk/nature/animals is the site you want to check out. If you have a question about bears, monkeys, lions, elephants, or any

"I go there at least 3 times a week."
How often do *you* take advantage of www.neamb.com?
On the NEA Member Benefits Web Site, you'll find valuable information on outstanding financial products and services, along with the latest news and special discount programs. Plus, there are many FREE offers just for members – everything from free literature to free resources for your classroom. The Site is continually updated, so there's always something new to help you make smart financial decisions.
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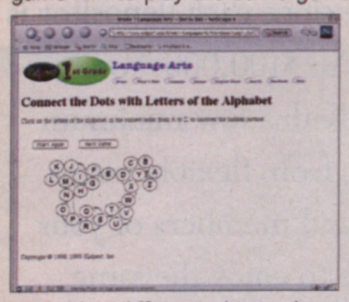
one of the 14 categories on this site, check out the animal fact files section. You can also learn the ancestry of your pets and how best

to take care of them. To top it off, you can post opinions and questions on the Animal Message Board. Learn more about your favorite animals and have fun doing it!

Connect the Dots

Let kids put the alphabet in correct order to uncover a hidden picture by combining connect-the-dots and letters of the alphabet. Kids will love finding out what the mystery drawing is and they can click on the next game link to play the same game,



but with a different object. A simple game, but full of surprises for younger children who are learning the alphabet. Go to www.kidport.com/Grade1/LanguageArts/Workbook/Lang1_ConnectDots.htm.

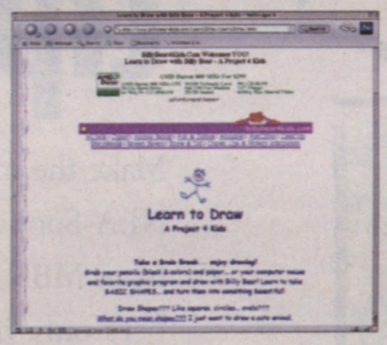
Expanding Boundaries

Right as you enter this site, you can see how the United States has expanded from the 1650's all the way to the 20th century. It is a helpful site to see how state's borders have moved around so frequently and what the final picture of the United States looks like. Surprised at how frequently state boundaries

change? Well, just click on Animation and United States counties to see how rapidly our counties become bigger or smaller. Go to www.ac.wwu. edu/~stephan/48states.html for the main site.

Developing Drawings

Get your students interested in drawing just by using basic shapes such as circles and squares to produce animals like penguins, bears, and frogs. Each animal picture comes with a drawing sheet, which takes kids through the process of creating these cute figures. The key to these drawings is their simple shape, and kids will be excited to come up with these



animal pictures themselves. Visit www.billybear4kids.com/Learn2Draw/Learn2Draw.html to get your students started on drawing.

Learn and Earn

Here's a Web site that provides financial education for kids. It's about encouraging learning through inquiry and getting kids started out on the path to money smarts. It's also about showing kids that money smarts isn't just earning until you're blue in the wallet. Money smarts

means working hard, saving, and investing. And giving back to the people who helped you out when you needed it. Each time your students learn about financial concepts, they'll be earning points which your school can redeem for technology-based rewards. In the FleetKids program, each child investigates an array of mathematic, financial, and social concepts, including setting goals, saving and budgeting, balancing "needs" and "wants," and learning to work with teams developing solutions. In keeping with the hands-on nature of the site, FleetKids activities reflect real-world experiences. Go to www.fleetkids.com/fleet/home.b.html.

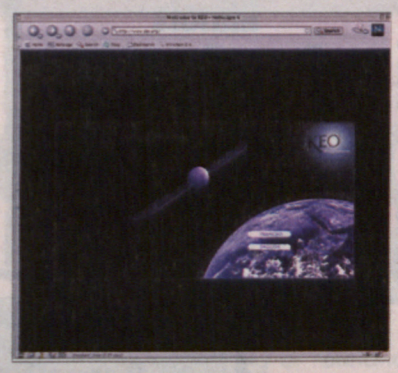
African Americans in History

Did you know that Lewis Temple was the inventor of the whaling harpoon or that Mary Eliza Mahoney was the first African American graduate nurse in America? The Web site, www.bridgew.edu/HOBA/thumglry.htm, serves as a detailed

and educational guide to leading African Americans in history, starting with Crispus Attucks in 1723. Click on one of the 30 portraits to learn more about these Americans and their achievements.

Messages for Future Generations

At the end of 2003, the satellite KEO will be launched into space. It will return to Earth 50,000 years later to offer our future generations messages that we can write to them through www.keo.org. Once in orbit, KEO will circle the planet with the



millions of messages and in the distant future, while orbiting, it will create an illuminating aurora borealis that will light up the sky. Submit your message of what you want future generations to know.

Dynamic Dynos

Dinosaurs—always fascinating and mysteriour creatures, but often misunderstood. At the U.S. Geological Survey's site, http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/dinosaurs/, you can get some of the myths about dinosaurs cleared

up. Questions like how dinosaurs are named, what they ate, and how long they lived are answered here.

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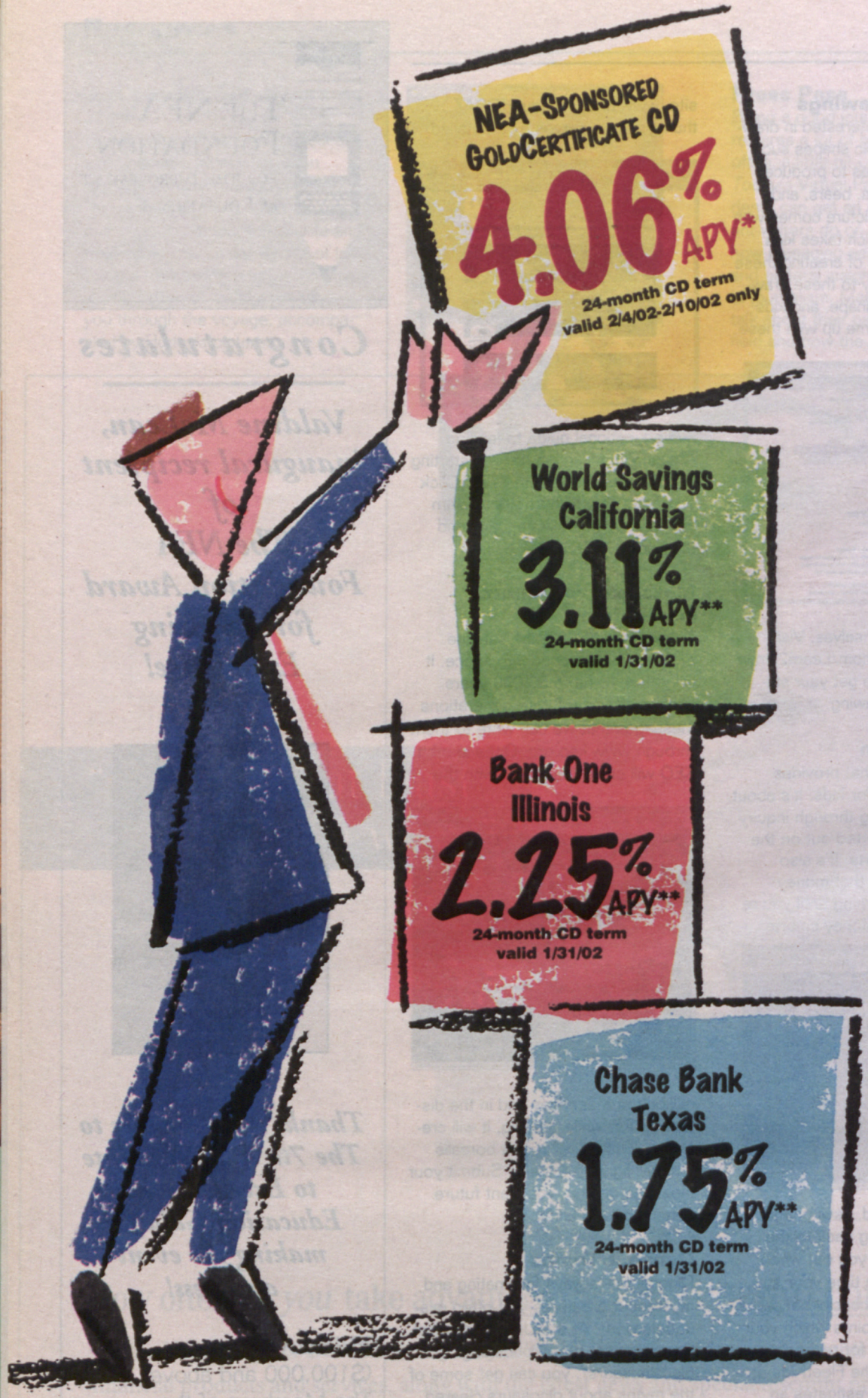

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†In weekly surveys published by *The Bank Rate Monitor,* MBNA has consistently ranked among the top 1% of more than 8,000 banks nationwide.

*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) for the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate CD is valid from 2/4/02 through 2/10/02, based on a $1,000 minimum opening deposit, a term of 24 months, and assumes that interest remains in the account until maturity. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal of CD principal. Withdrawals and fees may reduce earnings.

**All other bank APYs shown are valid as of 1/31/02, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 24 months. Source – *Informa Research Services,* 1/31/02.

ΔEligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

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Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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DIVERSITY Calendar

April

April (month long)—Autism Awareness Month
Learn more about this developmental disability throughout the month through research and awareness. You can visit sites such as http://autism.about.com for more information.

April 7—World Health Day
Commemorates the establishment of the World Health Organization in 1948. Call the American Association for World Health at 202/466-5883 to find out more.

April 8—Hanamatsun or Flower Festival
The Buddhist celebration of Buddha's birthday is honored on this day. Learn more about other Buddhist holidays at www.wheeloftheyear.com.

April 14—Nava Varsham
Nepalese New Year celebration and only Nepal holiday that doesn't follow the lunar calendar. Other listings of Nepalese holidays are available at www.nepaltravel.com.

April 14—Pan-American Day
Established by a presidential proclamation, this day honors the friendship among Western Hemisphere Republics. The day also respects a spirit of cooperation between the nations.

april

May

May (month long)—Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May is the month to celebrate the collective accomplishments of Asian Pacific Americans, who have diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures.

May 5—Cinco de Mayo
The Mexican anniversary of the victory over the French Army in the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Visit www.vivacincodemayo.org/history.htm to learn about the famous battle.

May 17–18—Shavuot
The Jewish festival that marks the giving of the law (Torah) to Moses on Mt. Sinai. To find out the dates of other Jewish holidays this year, go to http://bnaibrith.org/caln.html.

May 20—Victoria Day
A Canadian national holiday, it is also called the Queen's Birthday. Get more information from the Canadian Embassy at 202/682-7703.

May 27—Memorial Day
A day commemorating those who died in war, defending America. Always occurs on the last Monday in May. Let your students learn more about the holiday at www.kidsturncentral.com/holidays/memorialday.htm.

may

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NEA Members receive great mortgage rates, exceptional service, fast decisions and a 4 day/3 night "Driveaway Getaway" vacation** "on the house." (Transportation is not included.) It couldn't be easier.

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Call 1-800-NEA-4-YOU (1-800-632-4968).
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Getting An Ear Full

In my classroom in November, I asked the students to write themselves a note on a small piece of paper to bring to school a small bowl and spoon. I then asked the students to be sure to put the note in a safe place. On the day they were needed, Michael was the only child who had forgotten to bring his bowl and spoon. In January, Michael began complaining about having an earache. I called his mother and informed her of the situation. The next day Michael returned to school and seemed just fine. Michael's mom came in after school to talk about what happened at the doctor's office. When Michael's ear was flushed with water, out came wax, and embedded in the wax was a small piece of paper. When the doctor opened the paper it read, "Remember to bring a small bowl and spoon."

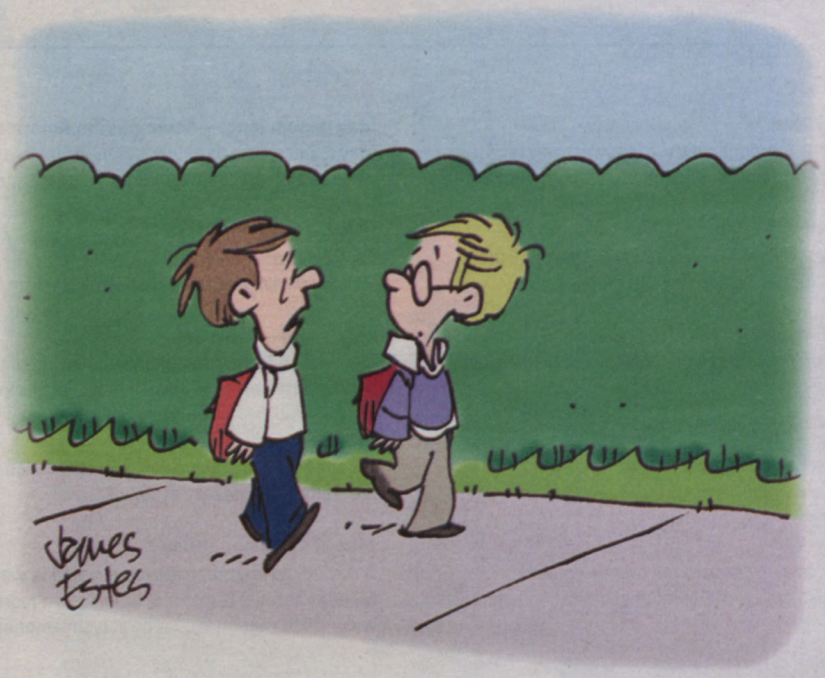
Nancy Celebrezze
Medina, Ohio

During a review in my sixth grade social studies class for a test on ancient Egypt, I asked my students where Egyptians got most of their food. Confusing the ancient Egyptian society with other ancient cultures we'd studied, students began calling out answers such as hunting, trading, gathering, etc. I reminded them of the importance of the Nile River to the Egyptians, hoping one of my students would remember that the annual flooding made farming possible, thereby providing food. After my hint, Bryan excitedly began waving his hand in the air. "Kelp!" he said loudly. "They ate kelp." Not sure at this point whether to laugh or cry, I simply said, "Isn't that seaweed?" and quietly moved on to a different topic.

Stefanie Carbone
East Hartford, Connecticut

School psychologists often work in several different school buildings, so we rarely get to know all the students as well as we would like. As I was crossing the school yard the other day, a second grade student "almost" recognized me, but stopped her play to chat anyway. "Are you somebody's grandfather or father?" she asked. "Why, yes! I am both a father AND a grandfather. How did you know?" She paused a moment as if considering the best way to answer. "Well," she noted, "you just look kinda old."

Philip Bowser
Roseburg, Oregon



"I'm not tellin' my dad I had to stay after school... I'm tellin' him I had to put in some overtime."

One day while I was teaching a middle school Language Arts class, a student was trying to recall the term "rhetorical." Giving an example, he said, "When a teacher asks, 'How stupid do you think I am?' and she doesn't really want you to answer, what's that called?" Before I could respond to his question, another student piped up: "Common sense."

Donna Pitino
Torrington, Connecticut

I teach U.S. History in a high school. Justin, one of my students, tried to impress me one day when he observed that the objective for the day's lesson concerned World War I. He explained that the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand from Austria caused that country to declare war on Suburbia. I congratulated him but corrected the name of the country to Serbia. I explained that suburbia is the general location between an urban area and a rural area. Not willing to accept being misinformed, Justin responded, "Yeah, well, they declared war on them, too."

Ron Browning
Essex, Maryland

Recently our school had a visit from the Governor of Alabama. On the day of his arrival, I sent one of my little first grade helpers to the office to take the morning report. When he came back to our room he announced to all in attendance, "Mrs. Thomas, the government is here!"

Pattie Thomas
Talladega, Alabama

My sixth graders may like to believe they are adolescents, but stories like this show their innocent side. It was the first week of school, and I was looking for one of my students, Faith. I asked the class who had Faith in their group. One young man raised his hand and sincerely answered, "Mrs. B, I have total faith in my group!"

Barb Brezel
S. Windsor, Connecticut

Josh was standing at my desk practicing his sight words. I was wearing a blazer with shoulder pads and he had his hand on my shoulder. Josh commented, "Oh, my mom has a Wonder Bra too!" Not knowing what to say, I quickly replied, "How nice, next word?"

Cheryl Roberts
Gainesville, Georgia

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

Which Witch?

After my kindergarten class finished reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, I saw one little boy furiously shaking and holding his hand up for my attention. I noticed that he had a troubled and somewhat anxious look on his face.

After I gave him permission to speak, he asked, "Which witch are we talking about—the 'good witch' or the 'bad witch?' Evidently, he was confused about the part of the Pledge of Allegiance that says... "For which it stands!"

Vicky Shelton
Elmore City, Oklahoma

One morning in my reading class, I had students read a story, then answer questions about it in their workbooks. When finished, the students were supposed to bring up their workbooks so I could compare their answers to the responses contained in the teacher's guide.

The first question about this particular story was, "Is this a true story? How do you know?" One student wrote "no" for the first part and, "It said at the beginning of the story," for the second. I told her that she needed to be more specific on the second part and sent her back.

When she returned, I got the distinct impression that she must have been looking at the teacher's guide while I was correcting her work. Her sentence now read, "It said at the beginning of the story: Accept reasonable responses."

Nancy Tincher
Boardman, Oregon

I was teaching vocabulary words to my second grade class when we came upon the word "built." We went through the room discussing how and what in our classroom had been built.

A little boy in the last row raised his hand, "Miss Stallard, Miss Stallard, I know what is built!" I called on him to give his answer. "You are!"

Needless to say, I was mortified, and the parent helper in the back of the room made it even worse when she leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Ya know, I think he meant that!"

Angela Stallard
Wise, Virginia

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